

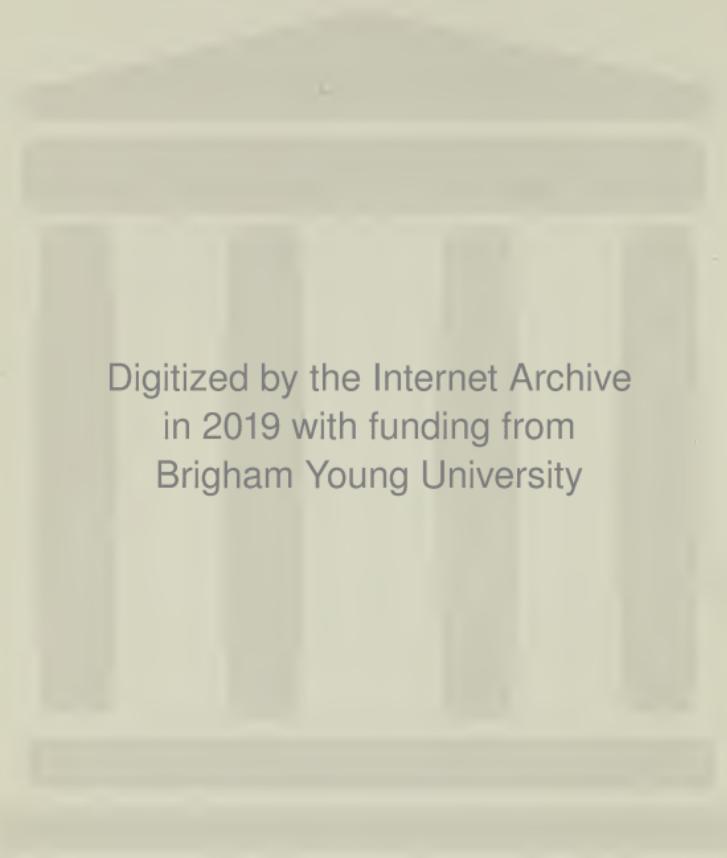
Stories from The Best of Books



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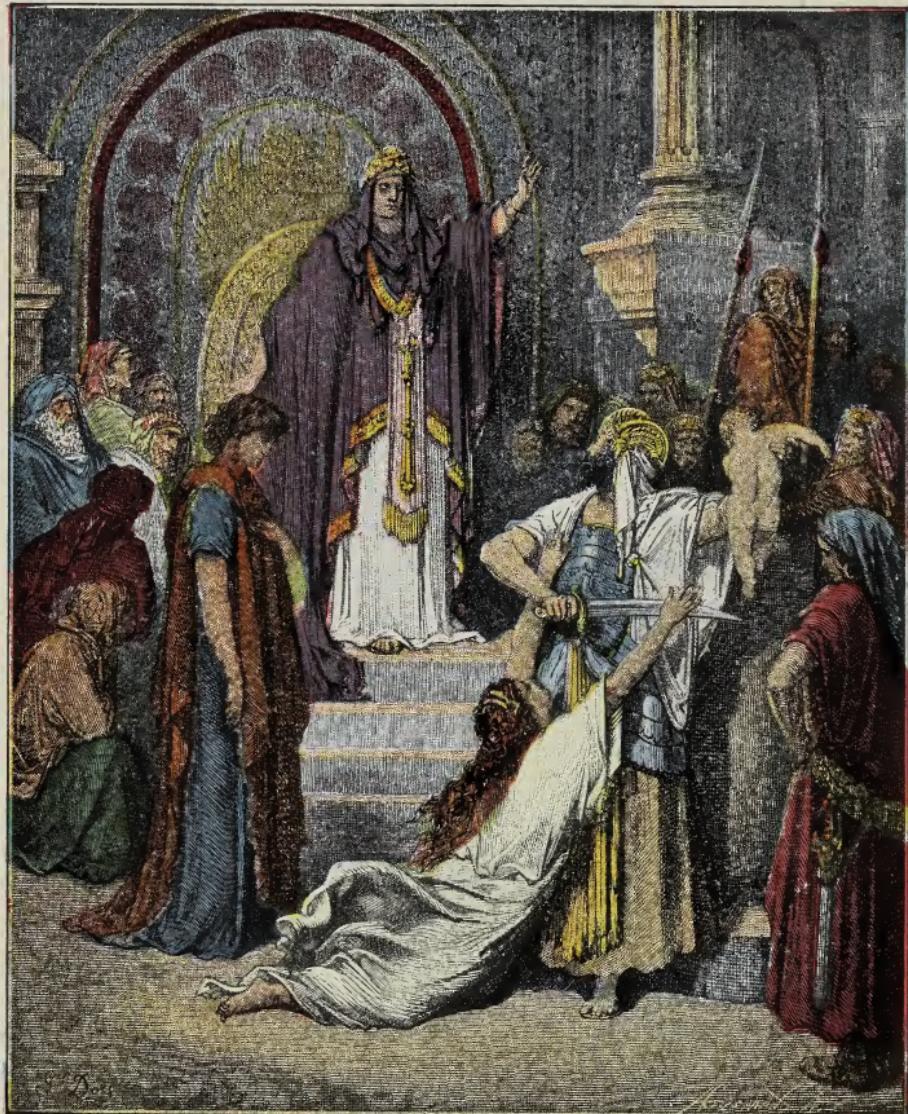
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Bobby Ballachay
from "The Aunts"

Feb 10th 1920



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THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON

Drawn by Gustave Doré

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Stories from The Best of Books

Bible Stories Retold by
Charlotte M. Yonge—Margaret E. Sangster
—Harriet S. B. Beale—Robert Bird
—L. L. Weedon

Illustrated

G. P. Putnam's Sons
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New York and London

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NOTE

THIS volume does not undertake to give a consecutive narrative of the Bible records. It presents simply a series of beautiful stories selected from the highest source of literature that the world has known,—stories which have for thousands of years charmed and instructed the children of men.

The selections for this volume have been made in part direct from the biblical text (King James Version) and in part from that of the biblical stories as presented by certain popular writers, such as Charlotte M. Yonge, Margaret E. Sangster, and others. The publishers have thought best not to undertake to modify in any way the form of presentation made by these several writers. The text of each story will be found consistent with itself in the forms of expression, but the different forms accepted as desirable by the several contributors have been retained as originally brought into print.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE following selections are included under arrangement with the firms below specified, who are the authorized publishers of the works from which the citations are made:

Messrs. Moffat, Yard & Company, *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster: "The Story of Rebekah's Children and of the Ladder to the Sky," "The Story of Ruth and Naomi," "The Story of the Writing on the Wall and of Daniel in the Lion's Den," "The Coming of the Christ Child," "The Story of Ananias and Sapphira."

The Century Company, *The Bible for Young People*, arranged from the King James version of the Bible: "The Story of Jacob and Joseph."

Messrs. Duffield & Company, *Stories from the Old Testament*, by Harriet S. Blaine Beale: "The Story of Samuel."

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OLD TESTAMENT

Stories from the Best of Books

The Making of the World

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." — *Gen. 1. 1.*

THE above text is taken from the first chapter in the Bible, in which an account is given of the work of creation and of the making by God of the earth on which we live.

The world was all one mass — dark, empty and shapeless — till God made the light by his Word, and said that the light was good. Without light we could not live: even the very trees and flowers would die. When we have been in the dark how glad we are to see the light come back, even if it be only one gray line beginning in the sky! This show show blessed is the gift. It was good, too, that we should have quiet dark night for rest and stillness.

The second great change enclosed the earth in an outer ball of air, which we call the sky or firmament. That is the deep blue into which we look up and up. The water rises up from the earth and makes the clouds that take such

strange shapes, sometimes dark and full of rain to water the earth, sometimes shining white, or pink and golden with morning or evening light.

The third great change was, that water filled the deep hollows of the earth, while the hills rose up dry above them, with rivers and streams running down their slopes into the deep seas below. God did not leave the land bare and stony. He clothed it with green fresh plants and herbs, with leaves and flowers, and trees to give us their fruit or their wood, and filled even the sea with plants formed to live under water.

Next, God allowed the rays of the sun to gladden the earth, and let it see the moon lighted up by the sun, as well as the stars far beyond our firmament. We count the months by the changes in the moon; and our earth's journey round the sun marks our years and seasons. We all rejoice in a bright sunny day, though the sun is too bright and glorious for us to bear to gaze at him; and how lovely the moon looks, either as a young crescent, or a beautiful full moon!

The waters began to be full of live things, that swam, or crept, or flew: fishes, and birds, and insects. By that time this world was nearly as we see it, and a beautiful home for us to live in. Then God made the four-footed beasts — sheep and cows, and horses, dogs, cats, elephants, lions —

all that we use or admire; and, last of all, when he had made this earth a happy healthy place, he planted the garden of Eden, and put in it the first man and woman, the best of all that he had made; for though their bodies were of dust, like those of the beasts, yet their souls came from the Breath of God. They could think, speak, pray, and heed what is unseen as well as what is seen.

There are many many lessons to be learned from this wonderful story. Let us try to take home one of them. Let us ask our Father that the ground below, the light above, the sky and sea, the sun and moon, the trees and flowers, the birds and beasts, and his holy day of rest, may remind us that they came from him, and that we may be very thankful to him for having given us such good things.

In the Bible God tells us that he made the world, and everything in it: land and water, and grass, flowers and trees, insects, birds and beasts, and last of all he made the first man and woman. The man was made by God out of the dust of the ground, and then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and gave him a living soul. And the woman was made by God out of the man's side. They were called Adam and Eve, and they were to be the first father and mother of everyone who was to be born into the world.

The good God gave them a beautiful home. It was a garden, with a clear river of water flowing through it, and all kinds of delicious fruit-trees and beautiful flowers growing in it. Nothing could hurt or vex them there. They did not know what pain was, they were never tired, and all they had to do was to dress the garden and to keep it. They had no faults, and never did wrong; and God himself came near to talk with them.

That was the way they lived, always good and always happy, whilst they obeyed what God had told them. In the midst of the garden grew two trees: one was the Tree of life, and the other was the Tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told them that if they ate the fruit of this Tree of knowledge they would die. We do not know what those trees were like, but some time or other I hope we shall see the Tree of life, for it is growing in heaven, close by the river that flows by the throne of God; and when we see it, and taste of it, we shall live forever, and be happier even than Adam and Eve were. We shall never be as happy as they were while we are living in this world; but if we try to obey God, and live holy lives, he will take us to heaven, and that will be still better than the garden of Eden.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

The Story of the Flood

I

AFTER that Adam and Eve had children. Some were good, but not so good as Adam and Eve had been at first; and some were bad. And as time went on the bad ones grew worse, and the good ones were tempted, and many of them grew wicked too. And so all the world was getting wicked, and God saw nothing but evil when he looked down on it. And he said that he would destroy these wicked people, and wash away the evil from the earth by a great flood. But there was one good man, whose name was Noah; and God said he would save him. He bade Noah build an ark. It was to be a great ship, all made of wood, and it took a great many years to build it; and all that time people laughed at Noah, for they would not believe that anything was going to happen. Noah made the ark, and stored it with food. And God sent him a pair of all sorts of animals that were in the world, and he put them into pens in the ark. Then Noah and his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, went into the ark, and God shut them in.

Then it began to rain. It rained for forty days and forty nights without stopping, and the rivers came out of their banks, and the sea came upon the land, and the ground was covered up. Even the tops of the highest hills were hidden, and everybody and every creature was drowned — all but Noah and those that were with him. There was the ark all the time, floating quite safe on the water. The storm could not upset it nor the sea get into it, for God took care of it and all that was in it.

The reason Noah was saved was because, first he tried to be good, and not do like the bad people around him; and next, because he believed what God said to him, and went on making the ark, even when he saw no danger. If we wish God to save us, then we must take care that we do just what we are told — not what seems pleasant now, but what is really right.

It must have been a sad sight for Noah and his wife and their sons, as the rain went on and on, and the water grew deeper and deeper, and everybody and everything was drowned. Then came a time when nothing was to be seen but water. Wherever they looked all was sky and water; but it had done raining, the sky was blue again, the sun shone by day, the stars by night, and they must have been very glad. And still the water got lower, till the ark did not float about, but stopped,

resting on a peak of a mountain, a very high mountain, and a few bare tops of other hills began to peep out. By-and-by, Noah opened the window of the ark and let out a raven. He never saw the raven again, for a raven eats dead things, and there were so many dead bodies floating about that it got plenty of food, and never came back to the ark that had saved it. He waited a week, and then he let out a dove. Now doves like trees to sit and nestle in, and they eat grains and seeds; so the poor dove found no place to rest in, and flew back to the ark; and Noah took her back, and kept her a week, then let her fly again. She flew away, but still she came back to the ark, and this time she brought in her beak a sprig of olive branch.

It was the first green thing that Noah had seen for a year! Noah's children have loved the olive leaf everywhere, and called it the sign of peace and goods news ever since.

For now Noah knew that the waters had gone down, and that trees must be able to put forth leaves again. Once more, after another week, he let out the dove, and she did not come back, for she had found a tree where she could make her home, and seeds to eat; and then Noah knew the sad time of the flood — a whole year — was over, and the earth had been washed from all her stains.

II

The sin that came into the world when Eve listened to the tempter had grown as men multiplied and made each other worse. The wicked people had been drowned in the flood, and Noah, his sons and their wives, had alone been saved in the ark. After a whole year of being shut up there, watching the earth, first drowned and then coming out of the water, they had just come out on the fresh green earth, with all the animals saved with them, when God spoke to them.

Then God made a promise to Noah. It was that no flood of water shall ever drown all the world again, but spring, summer, autumn, and winter, day and night, will go on to the end of the world, when it shall be burned up by fire, not drowned by water. That Noah, and all of us after him, might feel sure that God in his mercy will go on preserving us, and giving us days and nights, seed-time and harvest, he gave us something to look at as a sign of his promise. He so ordered the rays of light, that when they shine upon drops of water in the air they cause beautiful colors, making part of a circle, so as to form a bow. So when the sun shines on a cloud, as it rains, the fair bright



The Dove Sent forth from the Ark

rainbow is seen, as a pledge to us of God's merciful care and love to us. There is a rainbow round about the throne of God in heaven; and the lovely rainbows that we see when the sun shines out, and the showers drift away, are to put us in mind that we are safe under his care, in right of his promise to Noah and his three sons, of whom the whole earth was overspread. We are the children of his son Japheth, and all that was then said to him belongs to us also.

When Noah's grandchildren and great-grandchildren came to be more and more, and the world was being filled with people again, they still were not all good, and the longer time went on the worse they grew.

At last God called to a very good man, whose name was Abram, and told him that if he would come away from his home to a land he would show him, then he would bless him and lead him, and by-and-by give the land to his children, and that their children after them should be more in number than the grains of sand on the seashore, or than the stars in the sky; and that in his seed — that was, in a Son of his — all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

It was strange to hear all this about Abram's children, for he was growing an old man, and he and his wife Sarai had no child at all. But he

believed in God. He knew that God is Almighty, and can do whatever he will; so he only did just as God told him, and went away from his home, where God told him. He was obliged to take all his cattle with him — quantities of cows, and goats, and sheep, and camels, and asses; and he had servants to drive them. When they came to a piece of grass and a fresh spring of water, there they would stop. They had no houses — only tents, which were great curtains woven of goat's hair and fastened up with poles, so that they could be set up or taken down, and carried about. All his life Abram lived in a tent, instead of staying at home in a city, and being at his ease.

By-and-by he came to a beautiful country. There were high cool hills rising up, and green valleys between, full of grass for the sheep and cattle; and the wide sea spread out far away towards the sunset, all blue and glorious. God told him to look at the land, for that was the place which his children should have for their own; but in the meantime Abram had not one bit of it, and was a stranger there; and he had no child either.

But still he was quite sure God spoke truth; and that somehow, though he did not know how, it would come about that his children should

have the land, and that in One all the nations of the earth should be blessed. That was faith.

Two men were traveling together. They were an uncle and nephew. The uncle's name was Abram, the nephew's was Lot. They had come from home, because God had told Abram to come away from his own home to the land that God would give his children. Abram believed, and did as God bade him; and Lot, the son of his dead brother, went with him. They did not go alone. Each of them had great flocks of sheep, and cows, and camels, and asses, and goats, and numbers of servants to take care of them. They would fix their black tents, made of camels' hair, in any place where they saw a spring of water and good green grass for their cattle; and there they would stay till all the grass was eaten up, and then take up their tents and move to another place.

Just now they had got to a stony place, where the sun shone hotly, and there was not much green; but Abram had built up an altar with the great stones, and prayed there. Abram and Lot loved one another, and were at peace; but when their servants drove out their flocks to get food and water there were apt to be quarrels. If Abram's men found a green grassy valley, they would not let Lot's cattle into it, and if Lot's came to a well, they would not let Abram's flock drink; and so on

They were always quarreling and making complaints to their masters. At last Abram saw that they would make Lot quarrel with him. So he said it would be wiser to part; Lot should go one way and he another—anyway there should be no strife. And he even told Lot to choose which way he would go. So Lot looked, and saw to the East a pleasant green valley, with fields of corn and meadows, and a fine river running into a clear lake, and five fine towns on the bank. He liked it better than the bare stony hills where Abram was; and he never thought whether the people were good or not, but he took the first choice, and went to live there. So Abram gave up. He had the right to choose first, but he would not use it. He let his nephew choose. For he hated quarrels, and knew they were wicked; and he knew how to stop them, because he would yield up the best. That is the way to make peace and please God.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

The Story of Abraham and Lot

THERE was a beautiful valley, with steep hills shutting it in on all sides, and a clear swift river running through the midst and spreading into a lake. There were fine fields and rich grass, where sheep, cows and goats could feed, and the shepherds shelter themselves under the palm trees; and on the bank of the river were five cities, with strong walls round them, and full of rich people, who bought and sold and made merry with the good things they possessed. There was one man living among them who was good, and was grieved by the wicked ways of the men round him, who only laughed at him if he tried to tell them of better things. One evening two strangers came into the city where he lived, and he was the only person who would take them in, and shelter them from the wicked people in the street.

Those strangers told him the place was to be destroyed, with all that were in it, because it was so wicked! Though the fields looked so quiet, the walls so strong, and the sun had gone down as usual, all would be ruined in a few hours' time!

Then the strangers took hold of him, and his wife and daughters, and led them almost by force away from their home in the dawn of morning, bidding them escape for their lives to the mountain, and not look back. They were frightened, and begged not to have to go so far as the wild mountain. Might they not go to the little city near at hand? And their wish was granted. Just as the sun had risen they entered the little city for which they had begged; and as soon as they were safe the four towns, that had seemed so strong and firm, were all burning with fire and brimstone; and all the sinners who had mocked at warning were soon lying dead under God's awful anger! Four alone had been led out of the city by the strangers, but even of these only three came into the city of refuge. The wife did not heed the warning not to linger nor look back, the deadly storm overtook her, and she remained rooted to the spot — a pillar of salt!

The names of those cities were Sodom and Gomorrah, and the one good man who was saved by the mercy of God was named Lot. And now a strange gloomy lake called the Dead Sea covers that valley with its heavy waters, and the bare rocky hills, crusted with salt, show that the curse of God is on the place.

Let us see what this terrible history means to



The Flight of Lot



us. This world will one day be burned up like those cities, and its looking safe and prosperous now does not make it safe. But God sends messengers to lead us out of it. If we attend to them, and follow their advice, we shall through all our lives be getting out of danger, and going on to a safe home in heaven; but if we care only for pleasant things here, it is like looking back, and our souls will perish with what they love. That is why our Saviour bade us "Remember Lot's wife." We should remember her when we are tempted to think it hard to give up anything pleasant, because we are told that it is wrong, and may put us in danger of God's anger.

By-and-by Abraham had a son — one only son, whose name was Isaac. All the promises God had made were to be for Isaac's children after him: and Abraham loved God, and hoped all the more.

But then God called Abraham to do a strange and terrible thing. He was to go and take his dear son Isaac to the top of a hill, and there to offer him up to God as if he had been a calf or a lamb. Of course, in general, to do such a thing would be shockingly wicked; but Abraham knew that when God commanded a thing, it must be right to do as he was bidden, however dreadful it was to him.

18 The Story of Abraham and Lot

So they set out together. Abraham took the knife, and a vessel with fire in it and Isaac carried the wood with which the sacrifice was to be burned. On the way Isaac said, "My father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Isaac soon knew he was to be the lamb, for his father put the wood in order, and bound his limbs, and took the knife. And Isaac did not complain or struggle. He was ready, like his father, to do the will of God. But just as Abraham had the knife ready to slay his son, an angel called to him out of heaven: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Then Abraham unbound his son, and was as glad as if Isaac had really risen from the dead. And he saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns; so he took that, and offered it up instead of Isaac. Thus God really provided a lamb for a burnt offering.

And He blessed Abraham more and more, and promised again that his children should have the land, and that in his Seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. That Seed was our

blessed LORD JESUS CHRIST, who, you know, was really given by his heavenly Father to die, and then came back from the dead, that all people might be saved by him.

Abraham and his wife Sarah had lived together many years; but at last Sarah died, and Abraham wanted to bury her. You know in all the country he had not one morsel of ground of his own; he was a stranger there, but he knew it would all belong to his children by-and-by. But he wanted to make sure of one bit where his wife should lie. So he went to the prince to whom Hebron belonged, and begged to buy a field with trees in it, and a rock where there was a deep cave that was called Machpelah. The prince said he would give it; but Abraham could not feel sure that it would be always safe till he had bought it. So he weighed out the price. It was not in little bits of money like ours, but lumps of silver all the same weight, and each with a mark stamped on it -- four hundred of them. Then the cave was given to Abraham, and he had his good true wife Sarah buried there, rolled in linen with spices. He was buried there afterwards himself, and so was his son Isaac, and Isaac's son after him, in the cave of Machpelah.

That cave has been kept sacred ever since. There is a building over it now, and no stranger

20 **The Story of Abraham and Lot**

is allowed to go into it; but deep down there is a golden grating, and far within lie these holy men and women of old. Their bodies are waiting to rise again at the Last Day, and then I hope we shall see them and know them.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

The Story of Rebekah's Children and the Ladder to the Sky*

I

THE beautiful Rebekah had two sons, Esau and Jacob. When Esau grew up he was brave and bold and liked to go out and hunt with his bow and arrows, roving over the hills. Jacob did not care for rough sport. He was soft of speech and quiet, a gentle lad who loved to stay in the tent. Of the two, Esau was the dearer to Isaac his father while Rebekah made an idol of Jacob. Isaac's pride was in Esau, the bold hunter, and he did not much notice Jacob.

One day Esau came home from the field very weary and faint with hunger. He had tramped all day in the wild woods pursuing his game, with nothing to eat. Jacob had been making a savory pottage with red lentils or beans, and as Esau came to the tent the fumes of the delicious stew tempted his appetite. He begged Jacob to give him some food for he was very faint. You would think Jacob could not have hurried fast enough to feed his famished brother.

* From *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster, by permission of Moffat, Yard & Company.

22 The Story of Rebekah's Children

Not at all. Esau had something that Jacob coveted, that he had often dreamed of and wished for. Esau, as elder brother, was the heir and held the birthright, and Jacob said softly: I am sorry you are hungry but I cannot give you my supper for nothing. If you will sell me the birthright I will give you all the red pottage you want.

It was a mean sort of bargain for a brother to make. But Esau, who was one of the people who cannot deny themselves anything they very much want, said in effect: O take the old birthright! What do I care for it? I am nearly dead with hunger, anyway. Make haste and give me food, and you can have it for all me.

Jacob said: Will you swear to give it to me?

And Esau took the oath that Jacob required and sold the birthright for a mess of pottage, for bread and lentils; and Esau ate and drank and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright.

A great deal of trouble followed this transaction. Isaac was by this time very old and almost blind. I have not the least doubt that Rebekah had been mixed up with the birthright business, for a little while afterward she helped Jacob play a very low trick upon his poor old father. It was a trick that only a woman would have thought of and carried through so cruelly. I will tell you about it.

Isaac was fond of the venison that Esau brought him and one day he said he could eat if he only had that. A word to Esau was enough. Away he went with his quiver and his bow in search of the meat the old man liked. But this did not please Rebekah, who wanted Jacob, for reasons of her own, to be pleasing to his father, more pleasing than Esau.

Come, my son, she said; you must take the place of Esau for once. I will help you.

So she deftly covered his neck and hands with goat skin, so that the rough hair would deceive his father and make him think it was Esau who came into his presence. Then she prepared a delicious dish that resembled venison and sent it to Isaac by the hands of Jacob.

My father, he called, My father, and Isaac, sitting alone in the dusk of his blindness, said:

Here am I. Who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said to his father: I am Esau thy firstborn. I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me.

Isaac suspected something. It did not seem possible that the hunter could so soon have brought down the prey and he asked how it was that it had been found so quickly. And Jacob dared to answer: Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.

24 The Story of Rebekah's Children

Still feeling that something was wrong, Isaac said: Come closer to me and let me feel whether this is indeed my son Esau.

And Jacob went close to Isaac and the blind man could not see him, but the old hands groped until they felt the hair of goats which Rebekah had put on Jacob's hand and neck.

He said: The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

Once again he said: Tell me the truth. Art thou Esau? And he said: I am.

Then having eaten the flesh of kids which Rebekah had dressed so that it tasted like venison, he spread out his hands, kissed his son and gave him his blessing. He said solemnly: God give thee the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

Jacob had no sooner gone away from the presence of his father and put on his own garments again, than Esau came home from his hunting. Esau hurried and made savory meat and brought it in to Isaac.

And Isaac his father said unto him: Who

art thou? And he said: I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau.

Then Isaac trembled exceedingly and said: What is this? Where is he that hath taken venison and brought it me? I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed.

When Esau heard these words he cried out with a great and very bitter cry, and said unto his father: Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And he said: Thy brother came deceitfully and hath stolen away thy blessing.

Esau was very angry, as he had a right to be. Jacob's name meant supplanter, and he had twice supplanted his brother. He had coaxed away his birthright, and now he had stolen his blessing.

No one can help feeling sorry for this son of Isaac, who, strong man as he was, lifted up his voice and wept, and said: Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me, O my father.

Isaac was puzzled. He had made Esau, by means of his words, to be a sort of serf to Jacob; he had given Jacob rule and authority and the best of everything. But he said, moved by Esau's bitter cries: Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live and

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shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Esau went out from his father full of grief and wrath. He made up his mind to bide his time. He knew his father could not live very long. He said: The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then will I kill my brother Jacob.

Rebekah heard this threat and was very much frightened. She knew that Jacob could not safely stay at home, so she sent him far away to her father's house. It was many years before he came back and he never again saw his mother.

Rebekah said privately to Isaac: I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth.

Esau had married two wives, both of whom Isaac and Rebekah disliked. As the custom was, they all lived in one home.

She said: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life be to me?

So Isaac sent Jacob to the home of Bethuel, his grandfather, and told him to find a wife there among his mother's people.

Long years of sorrow and suffering were to be the portion of Jacob. He had the birthright and the blessing and, after awhile, he had many joys; but great trials came to him, because he had acted so meanly to his brother.

II

Jacob had deserved to have troubles, but, though he had done very wrong and been unkind and selfish, he was not wholly bad and God did not cast him off. We can see that notwithstanding his faults God loved him, and this is a great comfort to us. Though Jacob took the wrong means to procure them, the very fact that he longed for the birthright and the blessing which Esau cared so little about showed that he had the right idea of their value. He was compelled to fly for his life from the vengeance of his brother and, when he turned away from his mother and his home, his heart was very sad.

Though the son of a rich man, he went away on foot without any attendants. He stole away lest Esau should pursue him in a fury. But he went on the road that Isaac his father told him to take and his face was set toward the far off home of his mother's kindred. Isaac said: We cannot let you marry anybody here in Canaan, and it is time that you should marry. These daughters of Heth whom Esau has married are breaking your mother's heart. Go then to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and seek a wife in the house of her brother Laban. And

may God bless you and keep you all your days. May you have the blessing of Abraham and may God make you the father of a great people.

Thus Isaac bade Jacob farewell. His mother cried when she kissed him at the last and, for days after he had gone, there were tears in her eyes as she stood in the tent door and looked over the desert.

Jacob went out from Beersheba with his little stock of food for the road, dried meat and bread and fruit, trusting to find water in springs and wells by the way. He guided his steps by the sun and stars as he went toward the distant land of Haran.

Night came on and, worn and weary, the young wayfarer found a place in a field beside the highway where he thought he would tarry until the morning. Perhaps he could hear through the silence the cry of the jackal, or the padding feet of wild beasts prowling about in the dark. I am sure that he knelt down on the green grass and prayed that God would take care of him and preserve him from harm. He gathered some loose stones that were lying about on the edge of the road and took them for his pillow and lay down and fell asleep. Hard was the stony pillow, but the tired eyes soon closed and the traveler forgot his misery and slept as if he had

been at home. In that sleep, dear children, Jacob had the loveliest dream ever given to mortal man.

He dreamed that he saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven; the ladder's foot was on the ground, but the top was lost beyond the sky; and behold! the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. At the very top of it, where it touched heaven, amid the brightness of the sky stood the Lord himself, looking down in pity and love on the lonely boy below. To the sleeper lying on the dewy pasture, his head pillow'd on the cold stones, God revealed himself in this dream, saying: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

When Jacob opened his eyes, morning had come suddenly as it does in the East, flooding the world with light. The wild beasts had hidden away in

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jungles, thickets and caves, the birds were singing, the dewdrops shone on the blades of grass, and the dark night was over. Morning had come. A beautiful new day was born.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said: Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said: How awful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.

The first thing that Jacob did in the early morning was to choose a stone from those on which his head had rested, and set it up for a pillar. He poured some oil on top of this stone, for it was sacred in his sight.

In those days when God had given anyone a great deliverance or a great victory he did what Jacob did here. He set up a monument of some kind that it might always remind himself of the Lord's goodness; and that all who passed by might see it, and think of God.

Jacob called the name of that place Bethel, which means God's house.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying: If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's



Jacob's Dream

house. And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give a tenth unto thee.

Dear children who read this old story, I have this word for you: Often as we go through life we are surrounded by dangers, seen and unseen, and many a time, though we do not know it, God's angels are all about us keeping watch, both when we wake and when we sleep. There is always a shadowy ladder, golden bright, stretching from our earthly home to heaven, and up and down that ladder the angels walk.

Margaret E. Sangster.

The Story of Jacob and Joseph*

JACOB AND ESAU

AND Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife: and Rebekah bare twins. And the first was red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau; and his brother was called Jacob.

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau

* From The Bible for Young People, by permission of The Century Company.

bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days

of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is our's: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And

he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

And it came to pass, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison: and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to his son Esau. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy

brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.

And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, My

father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and

wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou

not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's

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fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

JACOB AND RACHEL.

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down

in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If

God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee. Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and

till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favored. And Jacob loved

Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him. And it came to pass, that in the morning he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. We will give thee Rachel also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. And Jacob loved also Rachel more than Leah. And Leah had four sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. And Rachel envied her sister, and said, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob was angry with her, and said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld children from thee? And she gave him her maid Bilhah to

wife: and Bilhah bare Jacob Dan and Naphtali. Then Leah gave Zilpah her maid to Jacob to wife: and she bare him two sons, Gad and Asher. And Leah bare Issachar and Zebulun, and a daughter whom she called Dinah.

And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her. And she bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: and she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son.

JACOB AND LABAN.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee

since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me anything: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock. I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire. So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me. And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And the Lord caused the stronger cattle to bear cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted, and the feebler to bear brown cattle: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. And

the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? are we not counted of

him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is our's, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and wives upon camels; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the

sword? Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longest after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods.

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. And Laban searched, but found not the images. And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats

have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yester-night.

And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and

thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; and Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU

And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau

his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and heards, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou

saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the

company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face

of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servants: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? Let me find grace in the sight of my lord. So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle. And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

THE BIRTH OF BENJAMIN

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an

oak. And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall descend from thee; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel bare a son. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun, and Dan, and Naphtali, and Gad, and Asher, and the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin.

And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told

it his brethren, and said, behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

And when they saw him afar off, even before

he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then

there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's and captain of the guard.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a

prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife tempted Joseph to sin. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her. And she spake unto her lord according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant,

which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharoah was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

And they dreamed a dream both of them, each

man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee,

and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: but he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favored and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward

in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: and, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favored; and they fed in a meadow: and, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favored and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of

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Egypt for badness; and the lean and the ill favored kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: and, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favored kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; and the plenty shall not be known in the land by

reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring

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from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh:

For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

THE FAMINE

And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy

corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no more spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I

spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days.

And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and

took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: we be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are

true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

BENJAMIN BROUGHT TO JOSEPH

And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him,

we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: for except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and arise, go again

unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon.

And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, and said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: and it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food:

we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

And they set on for him by himself, and for

them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of their's. And they drank, and were merry with him.

And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Where-

fore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? with whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. And he said, God forbid

that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons. and the one went out from

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me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled



Joseph Making Himself Known to his Brethren

at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt,

and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your's.

And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his

father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

ISRAEL GOES DOWN INTO EGYPT

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their

little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; and the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is

your occupation? that ye shall say, Thy servants, trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob

blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And

they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.

Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

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And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

THE DEATH OF JACOB

And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware

unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who

are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first born.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his

right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day. saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan,

which Abraham bought for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

THE BURIAL OF JACOB

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought.

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their

father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath

of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

* Arranged from the King James version.

The Story of the Baby Moses

I

THERE were many slaves in the days of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, for all the Hebrews were slaves; and they had been living there for four hundred years, until there were so many that the land of Goshen, to which Joseph brought them, could no longer contain them. Goshen was near the warm marsh lands at the mouth of the Nile, where the floods came and the grass was green; but the Hebrews, with their black tents and their cattle pens, spread away to the foot of the hills, and many thousands entered the cities, and Pharaoh made slaves of them all. At first he was glad to have them as slaves, for he had plenty of work for them to do. They used to be shepherds, living an easy life, taking care of their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, moving about in camps of black tents; but he made them brickmakers and common laborers.

They were taken in gangs, guarded by soldiers, to the place where the brown river clay was thick; there they dug it out with spades, trampled it with their feet, and worked it with their hands, until it

was wet and soft. Then they moulded it with little square boxes into brown bricks for building. Others filled the bricks into baskets and carried them away to the boats in the river, for the sailors to take up to the great cities where the walls were being built. Others toiled at building these high brick walls, storehouses, forts, and even cities, for the great king; and it is not unlikely that some of the pyramids, which we now see as hills of brick standing on the banks of the Nile, were built by these poor slaves. Others were driven out to the fields, to drag wooden ploughs up and down like cattle, and dig with small wooden spades, and gather off the stones; and when the harvest came they cut down the crops and threshed out the grain, and carried it off to their master's barns. Others had to stand on the bank of the river all day long, dipping buckets into the water and emptying them into little drains that ran away into the fields. And over all these slaves were slave-drivers, who stood beside them with long whips, to lash them if they did not work hard enough. So that the poor Hebrews were very unhappy, and prayed to God that they might be free again; for they were the lowest laborers in the land, toiling for those who kept them down and gave them no money for their work.

But they increased more and more in numbers,

until the king was alarmed, and set them to harder toil, telling his slave-drivers to force them to do more work. But still they increased, until he was afraid that if they should side with his enemies and fight against him, he would be in great danger; so he treated them more cruelly still.

It is a very wicked thing to make slaves; but when a king orders their little children to be thrown into the river, the king himself deserves to be put in first.

There was great weeping and sorrow amongst the Hebrew mothers when they heard of the king's cruel order. And they did strange and brave things to save their little ones, and saved many of them; but also many perished, so that there was grief instead of joy in the poor Hebrew huts when a little baby boy was born.

Jochebed was the name of one of those Hebrew mothers, and she lived in the city of the great king so close to the side of the blue Nile that the white walls of the palace were reflected in the water. She had a little baby boy, so beautiful and so well beloved that she told her husband, Amram, that he must not be thrown into the river where the green crocodiles were, for she would save him alive. She had two other children — Miriam the singer, a girl of fifteen, and Aaron, a ruddy boy of three — and she told them that they were not to tell

any one that they had a little baby brother in the house, lest the king's soldiers should come and take him away to the river. And thus she kept her little baby hidden in the back room of the house, running to him every time he cried, lest he should be heard outside, and trembling each time a soldier in his white kilt passed her door.

For three months she managed to keep her sweet child hidden from the slave-drivers, with many prayers to God that he might never be found; and she loved her baby all the more because of the danger he was in, although he did not know it as he lay crowing in her lap and laughing up into her face. Perhaps the soldiers visited the Hebrew huts at certain times to search for hidden children, for a day came when his mother could keep him hidden no longer. With a sorrowful heart she saw that she must get him away, although she could not tell how. She weighed him in her arms, she measured him with her hands, and made up a plan to save him such as only a mother's heart could suggest.

She had seen a fair Egyptian princess coming down from the palace every morning to the river, not far from her hut, to bathe, at a sheltered place where the white Nile lilies grew and the sand was soft and warm, and she thought that if this sweet young lady could only see her lovely baby boy she

would save him. So this Hebrew mother went down to the river and gathered an armful of strong papyrus reeds, and with them she wove a stout basket long enough and wide enough to hold her baby boy, and she made a lid for it. Then she painted it inside and outside with black bitumen, until it was like a boat, and not a drop of water could get in. She lined it next with soft red cloth of red and green, as mothers line their cradles; and then it was ready to be a boat to swim and save the life of her little boy.

Now any man who could order little children to be thrown into a river should be called a fiend, and not a king, even if his neck were loaded with gold and his hands covered with diamonds. But you know of One who never wore a crown, who sat under the shadow of a tree by the roadside, taking children in His arms and blessing them, and who said that it were better for a man to be drowned in the sea than that he should harm one of these little ones; and you know His name is Jesus, your King and mine.

II

The morning sun shone brightly on the broad Nile, turning the pyramids on the banks into dull gold, and lighting up the palaces of the city; and while the white-robed priests went up to the temple roof to beat the brass gong and chant their hymn to the morning, the poor Hebrews flocked in thousands out of their little yellow huts, to resume their toil amongst the wet brown clay by the riverside.

Taking Miriam with her, Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, stole out of her hut, carrying a little black basket hidden under her wide blue cloak, with something asleep in it. Crossing the fields, she went down to the riverside and along the path until she came to the beach of golden sand where the red-feathered hoopoes strutted in the sun — the place where the sweet Egyptian princess came to bathe, not far from the lilies of white and yellow. As they went she told Miriam what she was to do when the princess came, and going down to the water's edge, at a place where the lilies grew thick, she opened the basket and kissed something in it, murmuring tenderly as she closed the lid again. Stepping into the water, she gently put down the little black boat to float among the lilies, where

the princess could see it as she came along the path on the bank above. With tears running down her cheeks this Hebrew mother turned away, praying, as she went, that all would be well with her little child; while Miriam, going a short way off, sat down on the sand to play and watch until the lovely princess came.

Slaves in red tunics, with swords at their sides, bowed very low down as they opened the palace gates to let out a bright throng of girls laughing and singing as they went on their way down to the river, and the wind blew aside their thin robes of white and pink and soft blue, showing bare feet thrust into little slippers of red and yellow leather. In front walked the young princess, holding a white bud of the lotus lily, and smelling it as she went, while slave girls fanned her with fans of peacock feathers. She, too, had red slippers on her feet, and her neck and arms shone like pale copper; but she wore no chains or rings, for she was going to bathe, and her brown eyes looked with pleasure upon the broad, warm river. She did not notice the Hebrew girl sitting playing with stones on the sand as she walked along the river's bank; but she saw a curious little black boat floating among the green lilies, and sent some of her maidens to bring the strange thing to her. Running down to the water, they lifted out the little

dripping basket, wondering what was in it that felt so heavy; but soon a little cry from within told them, and they hastened with their burden to the princess, curious as to what she would do with it.

The dark eyes of the Hebrew girl were watching them as she sat playing at odd and even with round stones — a favorite game of the women of Egypt. She saw them bring the basket up to the princess. She saw her smile, and noticed her pleased cry when they opened the lid; and she heard her speaking kindly to the little child, who was weeping loudly. The girls were crowding round the open basket, looking in at the child; and when they placed the basket upon the ground, and looked about them in perplexity, her time had come.

“This is one of the Hebrew children!” the gentle princess said, with pity in her voice, as she looked at the child’s red cheeks, so different from the brown cheeks of Egyptian babies. The little boy still wept loudly; and the princess’s heart was touched with compassion, for he would not stop crying. What was to be done, for she loved the little child?

Running with bare feet upon the hot sand, Miriam, clad in the rough red and blue of a Hebrew slave girl, approached the princess, and kneeling at a distance, said, —

“Shall I run and call a nurse from among the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?” The lovely princess knew that such baby boys were to be thrown into the river, and perhaps the meaning of it all dawned upon her as she talked with her maidens, and, turning with a smile to the kneeling girl, said the one word, “Go.”

With light feet and a beating heart Miriam sped away to the spot where her mother was hiding, calling to her in Hebrew as she went to come quickly, for the princess wanted her. The princess and her companions looked with amusement at the Hebrew woman as she hastened and knelt before them, and the whole of her little story was seen in her blushing cheeks and tear-filled eyes. This clever slave girl had found a Hebrew nurse very, very quickly.

“Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages,” the princess said to the kneeling woman; and she smiled again when the little child ceased weeping and held up his little chubby arms as soon as this Hebrew woman’s face bent over him. She was indeed the mother; but the princess would tell no one, for henceforth he was to be her own child.

When the little child became a boy, this good princess took him into her lovely palace to be her son; and she called him Moses, because he was



The Finding of Moses

taken out of the water. And there is a pretty story told about her by an old Jewish writer. He says she was so proud of the boys loveliness that one day she brought the little fellow to her father the king, that he might see how beautiful he was. The king took off his golden crown and put it on his curly head; but the little boy took it off again, and, putting it upon the ground, tried to stand upon it, which amused them very much. The old Jewish writer says this showed that the little boy would one day force this king to set free the Hebrews. But it is more likely that, having freed the Hebrews, this pretty little story was made up about Moses long afterwards.

Kings and slave-drivers are apt to forget that other people love their children quite as much as they do, and slaves sometimes forget that princesses have hearts under their pearls and lace. And this story tells us of the love of a poor mother and the pity of a rich princess, binding them by golden links at the feet of Him who loved little children best of all.

Robert Bird.

The Story of Moses and the Tables of Stone

I

WHEN the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, God had told Moses to lead them to the foot of Mount Sinai. This was a high, steep rocky mountain in the wilderness. And God told Moses to set bounds round the mountain, so that nobody should come and touch it; and the people were to pray, and wait round it for the holy and awful thing that was to happen. Then there came on the hill-top a deep dark cloud, and the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and it shook and quaked, and there were lightnings and thunders and voices, and the sound of a trumpet loud and louder, so that all the people trembled. Then out of that cloud there came a voice speaking to them — a voice that they all could hear, and that made them afraid. For it was the voice of God. And God spoke out of the cloud, and gave the Ten Commandments. They were the very same Ten Commandments you read in the Bible. God had come in this terrible and awful manner to speak them, that all Israel might hear and fear, and take

care not to break them. Afterwards God gave these Ten Commandments to Moses, written upon two tables — or pieces of stone — written by God himself. That was the way the Ten Commandments were given — by God's own voice speaking to men, out of the cloud, amid thunders and lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet, dreadful to hear. And God means us all to obey the Commandments, just as much as he meant the Israelites to obey them. They are his words, and must be kept; and if we ask him in our prayers he will give us help and strength to obey them.

When the lightning and thunder and the loud voice of the trumpet came forth from the cloud on Mount Sinai, and God had spoken the Ten Commandments, he called to Moses to come up and speak with him in the cloud. How wonderful it must have been! Moses was the only man that ever spoke so near to God.

God gave him two blocks of stone written with the Ten Commandments, written with God's own finger. Then God told him to make a chest to keep them in. It was to be made of wood, with gold all over it; and two figures of cherubims were to be one on each side. This chest was to be called the Ark of the Covenant. And it was to be put into a square room, inside a tent, that was to be made with curtains and carried about

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with the Israelites. It was to be called the Tabernacle. And this was to be a very holy place. The children of Israel would say their prayers in front of the Tabernacle; but they were not to go into the place where the Ark was, because they were sinful, and God is holy. That place was to be called the Holy of Holies, and no one might go near it but the priests whom God chose, and set apart to lead his worship. The first high priest was to be Moses' brother Aaron; and he was to wear a beautiful dress when he ministered before God — a high cap with "Holiness to the Lord" on it, a long embroidered robe, edged with gold bells and pomegranates, and a blue scarf crossed over his breast; and in the middle a breast-plate, made of twelve precious stones, each carved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, so that he might have them on his heart as he prayed to God. All this and much more God told Moses while he was on the mount.

When Moses went up into the awful cloud upon Mount Sinai, he stayed there forty days.

But all the Israelites below were impatient. They could not think what had become of Moses; and though they had so lately heard God's own voice speaking to them, they would not wait as they had been told to do. They cried out that they wanted something instead of Moses,

whom they had lost. So they took all their gold earrings and melted them, and made an image of a golden calf. And then these foolish wicked people began to feast and dance, and worship this golden idol.

Moses was coming down Mount Sinai with the two tables of the Commandments in his hands. And first he heard a shouting and singing; then he saw the people leaping and dancing, and the great golden idol standing in the midst. Then he was sure it was of no use to bring them the Commandments if they minded them no better. So he took the two tables of stone, and threw them out of his hands, and broke them to pieces.

Then he went down, and severely punished the worst of the Israelites for having disobeyed the commandment. And he broke the golden calf to pieces, and ground it to powder.

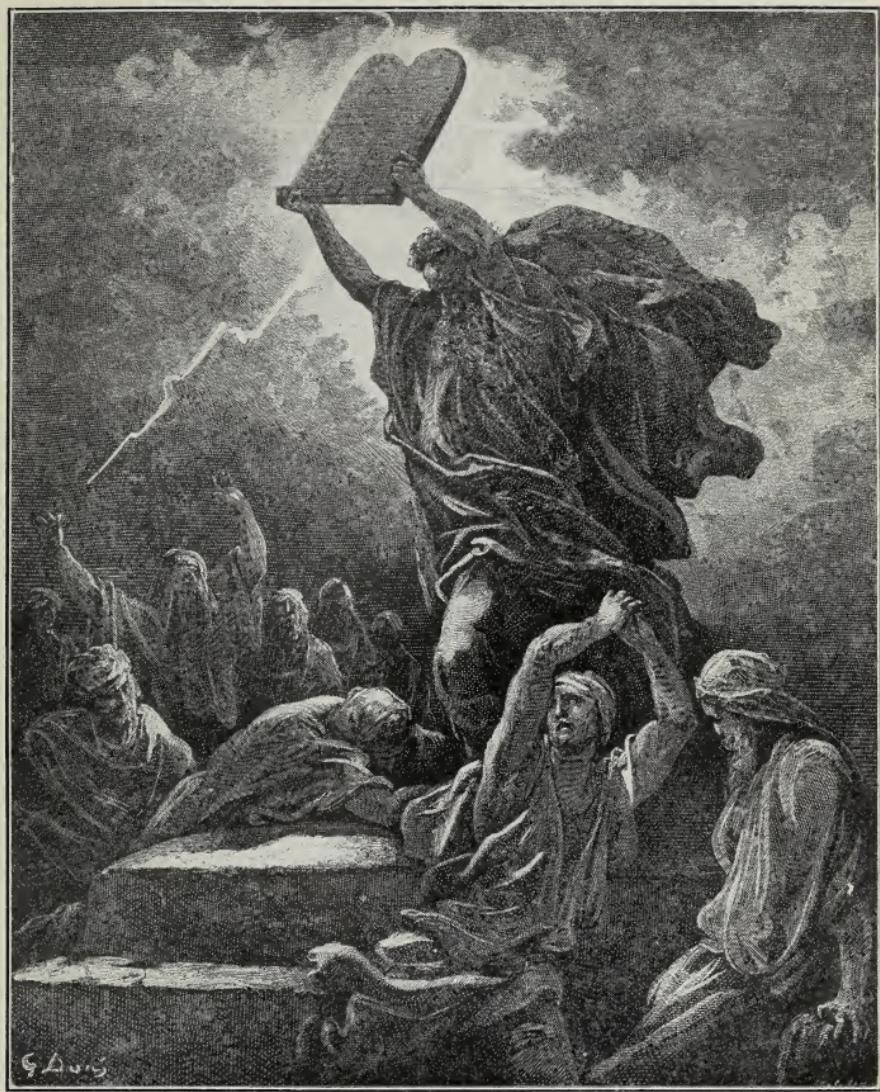
II

Then Moses said he would go and pray to God to forgive them, and try them again. So up he went over the rough rocks of Mount Sinai, and into the cloud again, where he had spoken with God before. And he prayed with all his might that God would not cast off his people, though they had been so wicked, but would give them again the Commandments on their tables of stone. And

God listened to Moses, and promised to give them the Commandments again. Then Moses made a great request: he said to God, "I pray thee, show me thy glory." But God said, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." But Moses was to come up the mountain the next day, and bring with him two blocks of stone, and then God would let him see as much of his glory as he could bear.

On the next day Moses went up the mountain again, and took with him the two tables of stone. And the Lord came down in the cloud; and Moses was in the cleft of the rock, where he could see a small part of the glory, and hear the Lord's voice proclaim before him, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Then indeed, Moses bowed his head and worshipped. No man ever came so close to God as Moses, with whom God spake face to face, as man speaketh to his friend.

Moses stayed forty days and forty nights up in the mountain. And God again wrote the Commandments upon the two tables of stone, and granted the Israelites to try again to keep them. When Moses came down from being in converse with God, the glory was still about his face. It was all shining like the sun, and was so bright that



Moses Breaking the Tables of the Law

the Israelites could not fix their eyes on it; and he was obliged to put a veil over his face, because they could not bear to look at it. Was ever living man so favored, and brought into such glory?

When the Israelites came into the good land where they were going, they were to be very careful not to learn to worship idols. For idols were no gods at all — only wood and stone — and could not hear them pray, nor give them what they wanted. Besides, the people round them had very frightful ways of trying to please their false gods. They had one called Moloch, made of brass, and they used to offer poor little children up in sacrifice to him, and make a noise with drums and trumpets that no one might hear their cries. There was another god called Baal, to whom they set up great images, and feasted in his honor; and a goddess, whom they called the queen of heaven, or Ashtoreth. Women used to offer cakes to her, and dance in honor of her, for they thought she sent the moon to shine on them. Now, the Israelites were not to worship any of these false gods. They were to remember how they heard the only true God speaking to them out of the cloud upon the mountain, and telling them, "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods but me." And God told them that if they would worship him and serve him, all should go well with them,

and they should be happy and blessed. But if they went after these false idols, all would go ill with them, and there would be only sorrow and misery.

After the Commandments were given, the Israelites went on their journey. The Ark, or chest, where the Commandments on their two tables of stone were kept, was carried before them; and God still showed that he was with them, for he made a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night go along with them, and rest on it.

When they came near the land of Canaan, twelve men were sent on to see it. They came back, bringing such a great bunch of grapes that two had to carry it between them on a pole! But they said the land was full of strong cities, and very strong men, and they should never be able to win it, but would all be killed. Only two men, Joshua and Caleb, recollect that there could be no fear, for God had promised to save them and bring them in. The others all cried, and said they would go back to Egypt, and threw stones at Moses and Aaron when they wanted to quite them.

Then God showed his glory, and would have cut them all off in a moment if Moses had not prayed for them. But he said none of those who had said they would not go into the good land should go. They were to stay forty years longer in the

dismal wilderness, till all the grown-up men, except Joshua and Caleb, should be dead, and their children grown up in their stead. Then their children, who had learned to trust God and do as he bade, should be the ones to go in and live in the promised land.

III

After all the forty years in the wilderness the children of Israel were quite close to their home in the promised land. There was only the river Jordan between them and the hills and valleys there. But Moses was not to go with them. Once when the people were crying out for more water, and God told him to command the stream to come out of the rock, Moses was so hot with anger that he did not attend. He said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And he struck the rock with his rod, instead of speaking to it. The water came out, as it had done before; but Moses had been so hasty that he had not thought how to obey God exactly, and so he was not to be allowed to lead the people in as a great warrior, lest he should fail again. God was not angry with him, but had forgiven him; only he had his punishment because he had done wrong.

Joshua was to lead the people instead of Moses. So before Moses was taken away, he called Joshua

and all the chief men of each tribe, and put them in mind of all that God had done for them, and warned them very solemnly, that if they broke their promise and did not keep the Commandments God would punish them — first a little, and then more and more, and would even cast them out of the good land at last. For, mind, God always keeps his promises; and as surely as he gives the good all that is best for them, so surely he will punish those who turn from him.

It was not God's will that Moses should lead the Israelites into the promised land, but he was to die on the east side of the river Jordan; and so he would have his rest above instead of in the land of promise. But first God told him he might see the land. So he went up into a very high hill: and there God made him able to see all the home of his people — the snowy hill of Hermon and Mount Lebanon where the cedar trees grow, and the hills and valleys where Abraham had wandered, and Isaac and Jacob had lived, and which he had hoped for all his life; and green fields, and corn-fields, and vineyards, on to the great blue sea stretching out to the westward. That was where his people were to live; but there was a better home for Moses. Nobody saw him any more after he went up into the mountain. There he died, and the Lord buried him, and no

one knows of his grave — only the children of Israel wept and mourned for him.

After Moses had gone out of sight on the mountain, God himself told Joshua that Moses was dead, and that he must lead the children of Israel into the good land God had promised them. Moses had laid his hands on Joshua's head, and God's holy spirit had come to help him to see what was right, and to lead the people. He must be strong and brave, and do all that God commanded, and then he would be quite sure to be able to drive away all the strange people out of the land, and to make a home for the people in the land that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had loved so well.

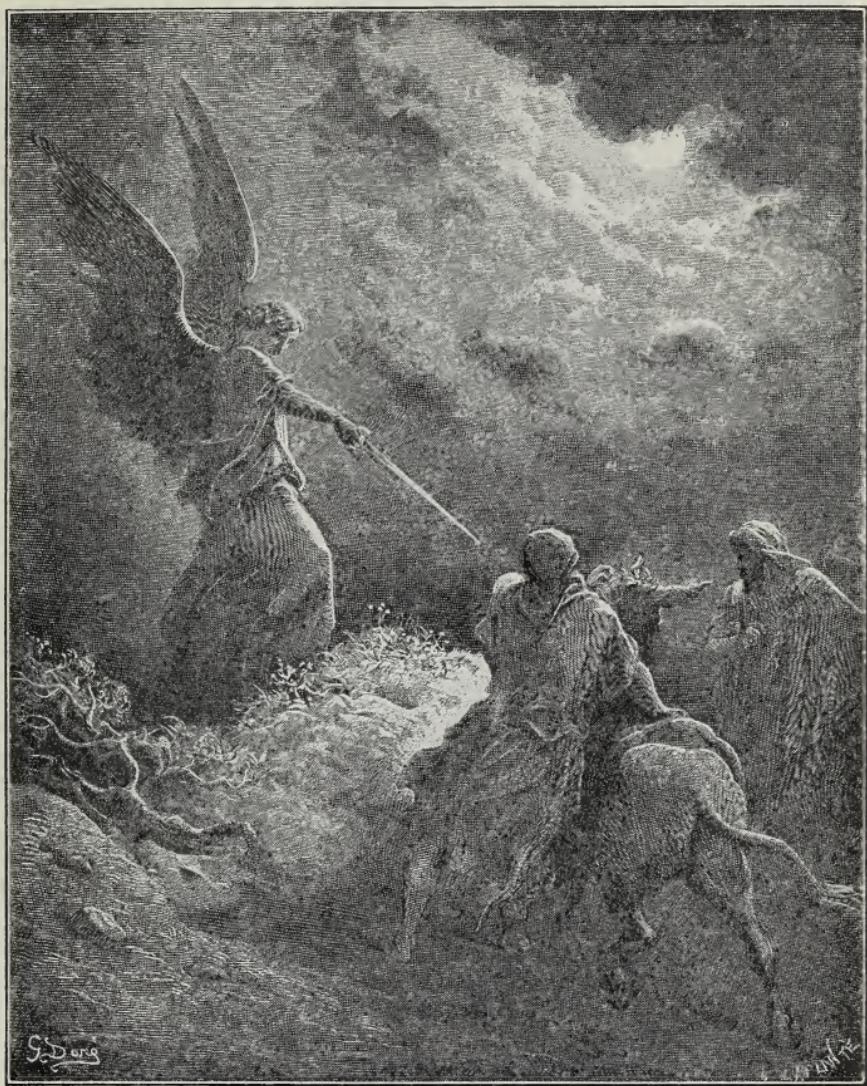
The people promised they would do as Joshua bade them. So he was their captain instead of Moses.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

Balaam and Balak

THREE was a prophet called Balaam. A prophet means a man to whom God made his will known, and who was thus much wiser than other men. This prophet one day saw some rich great men come to his house. They brought him a message, that a king named Balak wanted him to come with them, and would give him great rewards for coming. Balaam said he must wait for one night, and God would make known to him what he was to do. And at night God told him he was not to go; for what Balak wanted of him was to curse the children of Israel, and God would not have them cursed. So Balaam said he must not go, and the messengers went away.

But Balak sent more princes, still grander men, with larger presents, to fetch Balaam. He answered, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." But he had not left off wishing. He begged the messengers to stay, and see if God would give him leave to go. And this time God did say he might go, but that he should not say anything about the



The Angel Appearing to Balaam

Israelites but what God put in his mouth. Balaam knew that God was not pleased with him; but he wanted Balak's rewards, and he set off in the morning, riding on his ass.

Presently the ass was frightened, and turned out of the road into the field. Balaam was angry at this, and beat the ass. But again the ass turned aside in a narrow walled path, and squeezed Balaam's foot against the wall. He beat her again. Presently, in a very narrow road, the poor ass fell quite down for fear; and Balaam was very angry, and beat her harder. Then God worked a wonder. He made the dumb ass to speak, and asked why he was so cruel to her. He answered that he only wished for a sword to kill her. The ass asked if she had ever been like this before. He said, No. And then, full before him, he saw God's holy angel with a sword in his hand. And he fell down on his face. The poor ass had seen the angel all the time; but Balaam could not see him till God made him able. And now he was afraid, and would have gone back; but the angel said he must go on now, though he would only be able to speak the words which God put in his mouth. Think if, sometimes when you have been told you must not do something, you fret and tease to do it — is not that like Balaam? And perhaps you tease till some one gives you leave to

do as you wish. Then you get quite cross with eagerness, and are unkind to all that hinders you; and, after all, you do not find that any good comes of getting your own way.

There was a king named Balak, whose land the Israelites were to pass through. They promised not to do any harm to him or his people, if they might go quietly through; but he was afraid and angry, and wanted to have them cursed, hoping to bring God's anger on them. That was a very wicked and foolish notion of King Balak's; and God would not let it bring harm upon his people. They had nor deserved to have his anger called down on them, and so he would not be angry with them. And when Balak's friend Balaam tried to speak curses, God turned them all to blessings: and, instead of saying they should come to a terrible end, he could only say how happy and well off they should be, with God to take care of them, and be their King. He even went on to say that a Star should come out of Jacob, and a Sceptre should rise out of Israel — and that meant that our Saviour should be born among them. He is called a Star, because he came to give us light; and you know a star showed the way to the place where he was born. And a sceptre is the rod a king carries in his hand. So when he was called the Sceptre, it meant that he should be a King.

Only think how angry Balak was, when Balaam could not curse, but only blessed. I wish he had been afraid, and seen it was not God's will that he should hurt the Israelites; but instead of that, he went on in his wickedness, and was miserably killed at last; for God took care of his people, and would let no one do them any harm.

Now, recollect, bad words and bad wishes do harm to the person that speaks them, not to those they are meant for. If a bad boy came and abused a steady one for going to church, or saying his prayers, it would be very bad for himself; but if the good boy keep on quietly, nothing that the other could say would hurt him one bit. God would take care of him as surely as he took care of the Israelites.

You have heard how Balaam went to Balak; and how God made him bless the children of Israel when he wanted to curse them. But even this did not make Balaam good. He wanted Balak to give him a reward; and so he told him that though no harm could happen to the people of Israel while they were good and worshipped their God, yet if he could make them do something wicked, and turn away from their God, then God would be sure to punish them.

So these two wicked men sent a number of women to invite the Israelites to hold a great feast

with them, in honor of their idol Baal Peor. Many were so foolish and wicked as to be led away; and they had a great feasting and revelling and all kinds of bad pleasure these heathen women said were to do praise to this horrible false god. Then, though Balak might have cursed forever without hurting them, they had done themselves the harm. God sent a deadly sickness, and in one day twenty-four thousand people died.

But Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, did as Moses commanded him. He first put to death the wickedest of the people who had joined themselves to Baal Peor; and then he prayed — and all the people prayed and wept too. So God forgave them, and the plague ceased.

Afterward Phinehas led the Israelites fighting men to punish the wicked Balak and his people; and Balaam was killed in fighting with them. All the wicked women who had tempted the Israelites away from God were put to death too. So Balaam's evil counsel ended in all sorts of misery. It is very sad to think of him, for he knew so well what was good, and yet did what was so very bad. But remember this, nobody could hurt God's people till they did wrong, and then they hurt themselves, and God punished them.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

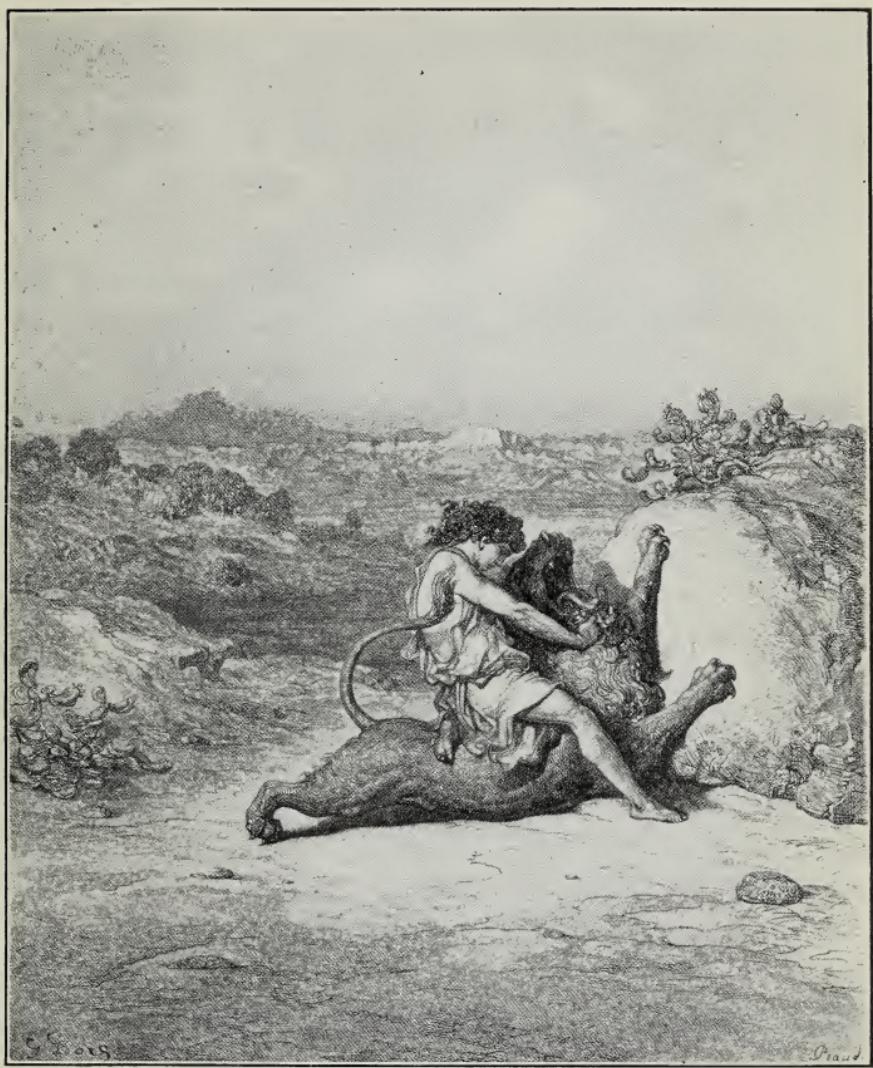
The Story of Samson the Giant

THERE is a giant in the far back history of every nation, and the stories about these men are always wonderful. Samson, the strong man of Zorah, was the giant of the Hebrews. The little village was built upon a round hill at the head of the wide grape valley of the Sorek, where it divides into two gorges running up into the hills of Judea. It was on the borderland of the Philistine country, stretching down to the seashore; and the fighting tribes often met each other in battle on that border, so that this little village sometimes belonged to the tribe of Dan, and sometimes to the Philistines. Here the wonderful child Samson was born, who was to be the strongest man in Hebrew history; and while he is not an example to us, many wonderful stories have been woven round his name which you ought to know. In some things he is like the Hercules of the Greeks, of whom such wonders are told that we do not know what to believe and what not, and so believe nothing. Hercules, we are told, tore open a lion's jaws with his hands; Samson we are told, tore a lion to pieces like a little kid.

A well of pure water sprang up a little way from the village gate, and overflowed, sparkling down the hillside; and Samson's mother often took the little child down the dusty path as she went with her pitcher. And when he grew older he carried it up for her full of water, and got many a drink; for she told him never to drink anything but water — no wine, no beer, nor even to eat grapes — nor was he to let his hair be cut. Thus the child grew up a little Nazarite, and the blessing of God was upon him.

He belonged to the small tribe of Gad living at that part of the hills, and both they and the tribe of Judah paid tribute to the Philistines, for they had conquered them; and the families had frequent feuds and fightings with each other. Samson grew up to be a man of great strength, but none of the stories about him are particularly instructive, and some are amusing; for in the history of the Hebrews in those savage times we must expect to read about men of all kinds, a few of whom would be fitting examples to be followed by a disciple of Christ.

It is told of Samson that he took a fancy to have a wife from among his enemies, the Philistines, who lived in the Philistine village of Timnath, on a little hill about three miles off, on the other side of the valley; and that he used to go to see her. And



Samson Slaying a Lion

as he went one day a lion came up from a vineyard and attacked him, and he tore the lion in pieces with his hands as if it had been a little kid. When he next passed that spot, the lion's skeleton was picked bare by the crows, and there was a hive of bees in it, and he took out the honeycomb and ate it. At his wedding feast he made a joke about the honey and the lion to the young Philistines who had come to feast and dance and rejoice, saying he would give a cloak to each of the thirty youths if they could tell the meaning of his joke. They could not tell, but they got his wife to tell them; and the story says he was so angry that he went down to the Philistine town of Askelon by the sea, and killing thirty Philistines, gave their clothes to the young men. This is a cruel story, and shows how men behaved in those days.

It is also told of Samson that when he was from home the Philistines took away his wife, and he was so angry that he caught three hundred foxes, and tying lighted torches to their tails, let them off into the ripe cornfields in the great Sorek valley, so that they were all burnt, the fire spreading into their gardens and burning their vines and olive trees. When the Philistines found out who did it, they went to the little village and burnt Samson's wife and her father in their small wooden house. This made him angrier still, and seizing

weapons he killed a great many Philistines, and left the place, to live in a cave in the rock of Etam, about fifteen miles higher up the hills, near Bethlehem.

The next story about him is that the Philistine tribes came up to the tribesmen of Judah demanding that they should give up Samson for punishment, and three thousand men of Judah went to surround his cave and bring him away a prisoner. He heard their story, and let them tie his hands with new ropes and bring him to the Philistines; then he broke the ropes, and seizing the jawbone of an ass, chased the Philistines down the hills, killing a thousand men. Then he became one of the chief men of Judah, and they made him a judge of the people.

It is also said that, although he was their enemy, he went into Gaza, a large Philistine city on the main road by the sea, and that when they heard of it they shut the city gates; but he rose in the night, and lifting both gates and pillars out of the ground, carried them up to the top of a distant hill and left them there.

It is told of him that he loved Delilah, a Philistine woman of the Sorek valley; and her friends got her to ask him how she could take away his strength and he joked her and told her lies, which vexed her.

He said that if she tied his hands with green

saplings or new ropes, or wove his hair into a web, he would become weak; and each time she did it he shook them from him and chased the Philistines who had come to take him. He told her at last that it was because his hair was long that he was so strong. Then she cut his hair, and he became weak; and seizing him, her Philistine friends put out his eyes, and took him a prisoner to Gaza by the sea, where they had a great temple to Dagon, their wooden God. There they put brass fetters upon him, and made him grind corn in prison.

The last story of him is that when his hair grew again his strength returned, and that the Philistines had a great festival in honor of their wooden god; and they brought out the poor blind giant, with a little boy leading him by the hand, to amuse them with feats of strength. And we are told that he asked the little boy to take him over to the pillars of the house that he might rest there, and that he grasped the pillars in his arms and pulled the house down, killing himself and many of the chief Philistines, both men and women. Thus, it is said, the giant avenged himself; and when his father and brothers heard of his death, they came down from the hills and carried away his body, and buried him at the little village of Zorah, where he had lived as a child.

130 The Story of Samson the Giant

We read of giants in the dim historic times of every country. The Hebrew spies said that the land was full of giants. Samson was a strong man, and his deeds have been magnified by distance; and yet there are none of them that we should care to copy, for they belong to the barbaric ages, when slaying one's enemies was counted praiseworthy and deserving of honor. But Jesus has taught us better things, and we do not think so now.

Robert Bird.

The Story of Ruth and Naomi*

ONCE, when a famine was sore in the land of Israel, a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to stay awhile in the land of Moab.

He took with him his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. His name was Elimelech.

In the land of Moab Elimelech died, and Naomi, widowed and sorrowful, tarried there with her two sons who had each found a wife among the daughters of Moab. The name of one was Orpah, the name of the other was Ruth.

Ten years passed by and Mahlon and Chilion both died. Naomi, longing for Bethlehem, decided to go back to her old home. She was lonely and homesick; her husband and her sons gone, she hated the land of the stranger.

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard that in the country of Moab the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her;

* From *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster, by permission of Moffat, Yard & Company.

and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.

The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Their home had been in the house with Naomi. At that time, as in Eastern lands to-day, when a son married he brought his wife home to live with his mother. These daughters of Moab thought it was very hard to let this old mother go back all alone to her own land. They could not bear to do it, but she insisted that they must.

Orpah at last kissed her mother-in-law and said farewell but Ruth clung to her and refused to be separated from Naomi. Ruth must have loved Naomi very much. All this shows that Naomi had been kind and loving to her daughters-in-law.

When Orpah had gone Naomi said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I

will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.

Where thou diest will I die and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking against it to her.

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem; and it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them and they said, Is this Naomi?

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty; why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

So Naomi returned to her own people and Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, came with her from the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest.

Though Naomi was at home again she was very, very poor and Ruth said to her, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

And Naomi said to her, Go, my daughter.

Long years before, when Moses made laws for the Israelites, he had given this rule, and all devout land-owners observed it still:

When ye reap the harvest of your land, ye shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall ye gather the gleanings of your harvest. Thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord thy God.

Ruth, the stranger from Moab, beautiful and modest, went therefore to the fields of Boaz and gleaned after the reapers, gathering into her apron the ears that they left.

Boaz, a man of great wealth, was of the kindred of Elimelech.

He came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, The Lord be with you, and they answered gravely, The Lord bless thee.

Glancing over the wide field, his eye fell on Ruth and he said,

Whose damsel is this?

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came

and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens;

Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men that they shall not molest thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine

handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and they reached her parched corn and she did eat and was sufficed and left.

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves and reproach her not.

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley.

And she took it up and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz.

And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men until they have ended all my harvest.

And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

This is one of the loveliest stories in the Bible. Ruth comforted her mother Naomi, and Boaz, who was of Naomi's own kinsfolk, watched the fair Ruth day by day. He saw her winsome grace, and her sweetness to Naomi pleased him and, having no wife, he decided to marry Ruth. Among the Jews there was a custom when a man died that his nearest unmarried relative should marry the widow. This explains the rest of the story.

At the gate of the town of Bethlehem, court was held daily and, if land was bought or sold, the deeds were certified there.

Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat him down there; and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down.

And Boaz took ten men of the elders of the

city and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's.

And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself: for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the manner in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for, to confirm all things, a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor; and this was a testimony in Israel.

Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have

bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day.

And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and do thou worthily in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem:

And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the offspring which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife and she bare a son.

And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman that his name may be famous in Israel.

And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it.

And the women, her neighbors, gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

So the fair Ruth, with her golden hair and her soft eyes, a daughter of Moab, became a mother and, in due time, when she was old, a grandmother. Her grandson was David, of whose royal line, in ages yet to be, the little Child of Heaven should be born in Bethlehem.

Margaret E. Sangster.

The Story of Samuel *

NOW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, and he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh, at a temple where Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests. And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he gave to Peninnah, his wife, and to her sons and daughters, portions: but unto Hannah he gave a double portion; for he loved Hannah. And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret, because that the Lord had withheld from her the blessing of children, and when she went up to the house of the Lord she was so provoked that she wept and could not eat.

And Elkanah, her husband, said unto her:

“Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?

* From *Stories from the Old Testament for Children*, by permission of Duffield & Company.

And she rose up after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, and tried to bear herself more cheerfully, but she was in bitterness of soul; and at last, as she wept sore, she prayed unto the Lord, and made a vow, thinking perhaps of Samson's mother.

"O Lord of Hosts," she pleaded, "if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Now Eli, the priest, sat upon his seat by the door-post of the temple of the Lord, and he marked Hannah, although she saw him not, and as she continued praying, she spoke to the Lord in her heart, but only her lips moved and her voice was not heard, so that he was puzzled by her excitement, and reproved her for unseemly behavior. And Hannah answered:

"My lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I but poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial (that is, a wicked woman): for out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken."

Then Eli answered:

"Go in peace: and the Lord God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

And she said:

"Let thy servant find grace in thy sight," and went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose up early the next morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned to their home at Ramah. And it came to pass that some time after this Hannah's prayer was granted, and she bare a son, and she called his name *Samuel*, saying:

"Because I have asked him of the Lord."

And that year Elkanah and all his house went up to Shiloh as usual to offer the yearly sacrifice, but Hannah went not with them, for she said unto her husband:

"I will not bring the child until he be old enough to leave his mother, then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever."

And Elkanah answered:

"Do what seemeth thee good," so she tarried at home for two years.

And at the end of that time she took the little boy up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of meal, and a skin of wine, and brought him unto the House of the Lord in Shiloh. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli, and Hannah said:

"O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am

the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore, I also have granted him unto the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord."

And in spite of her sorrow at giving up her son, Hannah made a song of praise, saying:

" My heart exulteth in the Lord,
Mine horn is exalted in the Lord :
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies ;
Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.
There is none holy as the Lord :
For there is none beside Thee :
Neither is there any rock like our God.
The Lord killeth, and maketh alive :
He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up :
The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich :
He bringeth low, he also lifteth up,
He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,
To make them sit with princes,
And inherit the throne of glory :
The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth,
And he shall give strength unto his king,
And exalt the horn of his anointed."

And Elkanah and Hannah went back to Ramah, leaving little Samuel to be taught to minister unto the Lord in the house of Eli the priest. And I do not like to think of how Hannah must have missed the child, and of how she looked forward all the year to the time of the annual sacrifice at Shiloh, when she could see his face for a few hours at least. She used to make him a little robe,

and bring it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, and except for this the little boy was dressed in a linen ephod, just such as the grown-up priests wore who ministered in the temple.

And Eli, the High Priest, who saw Hannah's loneliness, and how she grieved for her boy, blessed her and her husband, and said:

"The Lord give thee children for the one which was granted to the Lord."

And the Lord heard his words, and other sons and daughters were born to Hannah, so that her home was no more desolate.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men; and he became especially a pride and joy to Eli, who was now very old, and could find little comfort in his own sons. For Phinehas and Hophni were very unlike their good father. They used the service of the temple for their selfish ends, and when the people brought meat for sacrifices, they stole a part of it for their own use; and as they grew rich on their ill-gotten gains, they spent their money in leading such bad lives that they were a scandal to all the world, and Eli knew not who would become priest after his death. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days, and there was no frequent vision (or revelation).

And it came to pass at that time, that one night when Eli, whose eyes had now begun to wax dim, so that he could not see, was laid down in his place, and the lamp of God was not yet gone out in the temple, where he and Samuel slept, that the Lord called out of the darkness unto Samuel. And he, hearing a voice, answered:

“Here am I,” and ran to Eli, saying:

“Here am I; for thou calledst me.”

And Eli said:

“I called not; lie down again.”

And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again:

“Samuel.”

And Samuel arose, and went back to Eli, saying as before:

“Here am I, for thou calledst me.”

And once more Eli answered:

“I called not, my son; lie down again.”

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him, so that when he heard the voice calling him a third time, he only arose and ran to Eli, insisting:

“Here am I; for thou calledst me.”

But Eli perceived that it was the Lord had called unto the child, and therefore he said:

“Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee,

that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came and stood, and called as at other times:

"Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said:

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," as Eli had told him, and the Lord said unto him:

"Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did speak evil of God. And I have sworn that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

Here the voice ceased, and Samuel lay until morning, when it was his duty to open the doors of the house of the Lord. And he feared to tell Eli what he had heard. But the High Priest called him to him, saying:

"Samuel, my son."

And he could only answer:

"Here am I."

And Eli asked earnestly:

“What is the thing that the Lord hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he spake unto thee.”

Then Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him, and all the old man said at the end was:

“It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth good.”

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground (that is, be forgotten), so that soon all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established a prophet of the Lord. Dan was a city far in the north of the Promised Land, and Beer-sheba was a little place in the far south.

During all these years the wars with the Philistines had continued, and just at this time they defeated the Children of Israel in a great battle of Ebenezer, and slew about four thousand men of their army. And the elders of Israel met in council the day after this disaster, saying:

“Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us before the Philistines?”

And being at their wits' end as to what to do, they decided to send to Shiloh and fetch the Ark of the Covenant, which had led their fathers through the wilderness, in the hope that when the people saw it going before them into battle it might

inspire them to fresh hope and courage. So they sent hastily, and Phinehas and Hophni, Eli's sons, came bearing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim. The cherubim were great winged beasts, carved on the outside of the Ark, very much such as those you can see in collections of Assyrian antiquities.

And when the Ark came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise, they said:

"What meaneth this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?"

And when they understood that the Ark of the Lord was come into the camp they were afraid, silly creatures, and said, thinking of their own false images:

"God is come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of the mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues."

But their captains encouraged them, saying:

"Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight!"

And they did fight, and so well that Israel was altogether beaten, and fled every man to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter, and thirty thousand of the infantry were killed, and worst of all, in the fray the Ark of the Covenant was taken, Hophni and Phinehas being cut down as they carried it.

And a man of Benjamin ran out of the army, and came that same day to Shiloh, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, in token of disaster. And when he came, lo, Eli sat beside the gate watching the way, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God, that had gone out of his keeping.

And as the man told his news, all the city came out, and Eli heard the noise of the crying, and said:

“What meaneth this tumult?”

And the man hasted, and ran, and told himself his dreadful tidings.

Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were set that he could not see, and when the messenger said to him:

“Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day,” he barely had the strength to ask:

“How went the matter, my son?”

And when the man continued mercilessly:

“Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people,

and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of the Lord is taken," Eli, the poor old priest, at these last words, "the Ark of the Lord is taken," fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck broke and he died; for he was an old man and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

And while his family were sorrowing about him, news came that the wife of Phinehas had borne a child, and that hearing that the Ark was taken, and her father-in-law and her husband dead, she too had died. For when the women that stood about her tried to rouse her from the dreadful ill tidings, saying:

"Fear not; thou hast a son;" she answered them not, nor would she look at her baby, but called his name Ichabod, which means "There is no glory," and died, murmuring:

"The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken."

Now, after the Philistines had taken the Ark of the Covenant away with them, they were very much embarrassed as to what to do with it, and they brought it first from Ebenezer unto Ashdod, and set it up in the house of their god, Dagon. And when they arose the next morning, behold, the image of Dagon had fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark, and they ran and set it up

in its place again. But the next morning there was still more trouble, for not only did they find their image fallen, but the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands lay cut off upon the threshold, and only the stump of Dagon was left to him, a pitiful condition for either man or god! As if this were not sign enough that something was wrong, in a few days a terrible plague of boils came upon the people of Ashdod, and then the men of the place said:

“The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us, for his hand is sore upon us.”

And they sent for all the lords of the Philistines, and said:

“What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?” And they could suggest nothing better than to transfer it to a new place, so it was decided to carry it to another Philistine city called Ekron, very near the Israelitish border. But the Ekronites had heard of the misfortunes that had befallen Ashdod, and when they saw the procession coming there was a deadly discomfiture throughout the city, and they cried out:

“They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people,” and they gathered themselves together before the lords of the Philistines, saying:

“Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and

let it go again to its own place, that it slay us not and our people."

It was seven months now since the lords of the Philistines had captured the Ark, and they were heartily tired of it, and to add to their difficulties, the land commenced to swarm with mice, and the people attributed this plague too to the angry God of Israel. So at last they sent for the priests and diviners of the country, saying:

"What shall we do with the Ark of the Lord? Show us wherewith we shall send it to its place?"

And the wise men pondered long, and returned answer at length:

"If ye send away the Ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty: but in anywise return him a guilt-offering: then ye shall be healed."

Then said they:

"What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to him?

And they answered:

"Five golden boils, and five golden mice;" and then went on to explain and direct them. "Ye shall make images of your boils and images of your mice that mar the land," they said, "and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hands from off you. Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had

wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go? Now, therefore, take and prepare you a new cart and two milch kine on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and take the Ark of the Lord and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a guilt-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go."

And the lords of the Philistines did all these things as the wise men commanded, and the kine, when they were let go, took the straight way to Bethshemesh, a little Israelite town just over the Philistine border. They went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or the left; and five lords of the Philistines went after them.

And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, the Bethlehemite, and stood there where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered up a burnt-offering to the Lord.

Then the Levites or priests came and took the Ark of the Lord and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were; and the five lords of the Philistines, who had come with the sacred spoil, returned to Ekron that same day.

The Ark was then taken to Kirjath-jearim, and brought into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and the Levites sanctified Eleazar, Abinadab's son, to keep it, and let it abide there for more than twenty years.

Harriet S. Blaine Beale.

The Story of Saul, the Farmer King

I

THE dawn was appearing in a rose flush over the hills of Gilead, when Saul, asleep under the trellised vines on the housetop, heard the voice of Samuel below, calling him to awake; then he and his servant shook out their heavy cloaks and came down. A drink of sour milk, a piece of bread and some figs, would serve them for a breakfast, and the three men walked out of the town in the early morning, while the dew was still wet on the bushes.

Samuel told the young man to send his servant on before, as he wished to speak to him. When the servant was out of sight, he bade the tall farmer kneel down, and taking a sheep's horn of fragrant olive oil from the folds of his tunic, he poured it upon Saul's head, saying that he anointed him in the name of God to be a prince over Israel. Kissing him as a sign of confidence, he bade him go away, telling him that he would meet two men who would tell him that the asses were found and three men who would offer him bread, which he must take. Then he would meet a band of

Samuel's own young men coming down a hill, and he was to join them and he would become a changed man. After that he was to do as the occasion required, and God would be with him. When Saul turned and left the prophet, it was as if God had given him a new heart, for a change had come over him.

When he came to Gibeah, where his father lived, there met him a band of young men coming down the hill, playing upon small harps and pipes, tambourines and guitars, and singing what they had learned as students in Samuel's school of prophets; and Saul joined them and sang as best he could. Returning up the hill, they all went into the town again, and people who knew Saul were surprised, exclaiming, —

“What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” And afterwards, when he was king, the saying became a proverb of surprise among the people.

His friends saw that a change had come over him; and when his cousin Abner heard that he had been to see the old prophet, he tried hard to find out what Samuel said to the young man, but —

“He told us plainly that the asses were found,” was all that Saul would tell his inquisitive cousin.

Saul joined the young men, and went to live at Gibeah, to learn what Samuel taught; but it was

not till after two years that he was ready to be brought out before the people. Then Samuel sent messengers through among the hills, and up and down the valleys, and into every village and town, calling the chiefs of the tribes to meet him secretly in Mount Mizpeh, about ten miles farther up the hills, and the highest hill in central Palestine. They were to bring their tribesmen in thousands to choose their first king.

With knives at their belts and clubs in their hands the people gathered to this hill, for the Philistines had taken away their swords; and sitting in a vast crowd, with colored kerchiefs shading their faces from the sun, they listened to Samuel, the old prophet, as he warned them what a king would be. Calling upon God, he drew lots among the chiefs standing around him, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. Lots being again drawn, the family of Matri was taken. He drew again, and the family of Kish was taken; and he drew again among Kish's sons, and the lot fell on Saul. Then a great shout went up of, "Saul! Saul! where is Saul?" But Saul could not be found anywhere. Knowing what would happen, he hid himself among the wagons, tents, and baggage of the camp. But they searched till they found him; and when they brought him in amongst the people dressed in his long farmer's cloak, and

with a striped kerchief bound with a camel cord upon his head, the people shouted louder than ever, for he stood head and shoulders above all the men near him. And as he approached, Samuel called aloud, —

“See the man that God has chosen! There is none like him among all the people!” And they replied with shouts of, —

“God save the king!” for the first time in their history.

Then Saul stood forward, and told them what his kingdom would be like, in a speech which he afterwards wrote out and put inside the purple curtains of the great tent of the people. He bade them all go back to their tents among the glens and hills, and he returned to his home at Gibeah to plough and sow, with only a few chiefs round him, waiting until the times were ready to deliver his country from the Philistine conquerors. But some of the chiefs who were absent said, —

“How can this man save us?” And they would not have Saul as their king, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace, biding his time.

Later on, when he had roused the people and gathered the fighting tribesmen around him, and had won a battle with the Philistines, his friends wished to kill the men who would not have him for their king; but he replied that there would

not be a man put to death in Israel that day. The tribesmen took him away down the hills, through the long valley of Elah, to the ancient town of Gilgal, where the twelve stones of the twelve tribes stood in a circle among green trees by the Jordan, and there they made him their king again, with solemn sacrifices on the altar, and peace-offerings to God, and great feasting and rejoicing. And there was joy throughout all the glens and villages of Israel, because they had got a great fighter to be over them, who had defeated the Philistines — a thing that had not been done for many years.

And thus Saul left his plough and his oxen, to take up a great sword and a little crown, coming forward at the call of Samuel to lead the people in their struggle for liberty against their old oppressors, the Philistines.

II

Saul had now been king for more than twenty years, but he did not live in a palace surrounded with beautiful gardens. His home was sometimes in a little house of stone and mud, and sometimes in a large tent of striped blue, brown, and green spread out under a green tamarisk tree that grew on the hill of Gibeah. There he lived with his wife and children, about two of whom, Jonathan

and Michal, we shall hear a good deal. With a band of gold upon his brow and gold rings on his strong arms, Saul led his people against the Philistines, winning battles. But he was not able to drive them out of the hills, or free the country of the tribe of Benjamin, so that the fighting was frequent and sore when in the springtime of the year he gathered his young men to renew the struggle with their old enemies.

Samuel did not love Saul now, for Saul had offended him; and this is how it happened. King Saul had gathered the tribesmen round him at Gilgal, by the Jordan, to hold solemn sacrifices before leading them up the hills to fight with the Philistines again, and Samuel was to come down and offer the sacrifice. After waiting for seven days, during which the young men grumbled and began to leave him and return to their homes, King Saul acted as priest himself, killing the animals and burning them, and calling upon God to help him in his battles. When Samuel at length came down, he told the king that he had broken the command of God by acting as a priest, and would lose his kingdom, for God had sought out a man after His own heart to be king in his stead. This vexed King Saul very much; but he led his army up the hills, and continued his struggle for freedom, with his fighting-men, who were called

mighty men of valor, fighting against the tribes of the Moabites, Ammonites, Zobahites, and Philistines with some success.

And one day Samuel told him that God wished him to gather together an army and go into the land of the Amalekites, a wandering tribe who lived in small black tents, with herds of sheep and goats, camels and oxen, in the Negeb land between Beersheba and Egypt. And he bade King Saul kill them all, even the women and little children, for Moses said they were to be killed; for when the Israelites passed through their country on their way from Egypt, the men of Amalek attacked them in the rear when thy were weak. That was four hundred years ago, and King Saul was to kill them for what their forefathers did so long ago, which seems to us barbarous cruelty. But Saul did it, leading his men away into the south country, and sending messengers to warn the Kenites to fly from amongst the Amalekites, for they had been kind to the Israelites. And he returned victorious, standing in his red war-chariot, and driving his horses; while his men brought the best of the cattle, and the Amalekite king as a prisoner. Stopping at Carmel, on the Hebron hills, Saul put up a memorial stone of victory, and passed down the glens to Gilgal by the Jordan, where among the pillars of the twelve tribes he

intended to burn the animals he had taken as sacrifices to God, because of his victory over the Amalekites.

When Samuel heard that the king had not slain every man, woman and child, and all the cattle, as he commanded, he was very angry. He went out, but failed to meet the king among the hills, and followed him down the long valley to Gilgal, amid its green fields; and there King Saul told him that he had brought back the finest of the flocks and herds to sacrifice them on the altar to Samuel's God. The old prophet replied sternly that God would rather have obedience than sacrifices, and that for this disobedience he would reject him from being king. Although he had told King Saul this before, they were hard words for a king to listen to as he stood among his chiefs, in his fighting dress, with the gold rings of a warrior on his arms and legs, fresh from victory, and eager for the sacrifices and the feasting, and he begged Samuel to forgive him. The prophet, in his old brown cloak, turned angrily away from the king's eager pleading, and Saul laid hold on his skirt with such a strong hand that it tore the prophet's cloak, and the people saw that there was a dispute between them. Turning round upon the king in anger, Samuel cried that just as Saul had torn his cloak that day, so had God rent the kingdom from

him and given it to another — “a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou!”

The tall warrior replied humbly to the angry prophet, saying that he knew he had done wrong, and begged him not to dishonor the king before all the people, but turn his face to him that he might worship God. He was afraid Samuel would leave him in anger, and forbid the sacrifices and the feasting to which the people were looking forward. Then Samuel agreed to stay; but before he would allow the sacrifices to go on, he ordered the Amalekite king to be brought before him, and seizing a sword, he killed him with great ferocity — a dreadful thing for this old man to do.

The tents of black and brown of the fighting-men covered that level spot by the Jordan — for the army was not yet broken up — and the young men, with spears and clubs in their hands, had seen the dispute between the king and the prophet; and when the two went over to the altar among the twelve pillars to worship God together, the people crowded around them, watching the smoke of the sacrifice rising in thick clouds into the air, and waiting for the feast to begin. Then Samuel mounted his ass, and with his own young men following him, rode up the long Achor valley to his home at Ramah, mourning as he went because of Saul’s disobedience. And although the little

hills on which the two men lived were not far apart, we are told that Samuel did not go to see the king again.

We cannot but like the giant farmer who became king of his oppressed countrymen at the call of God, while the prophet's ferocity excites our indignation when we think of the teaching of the gentle Prophet of Galilee, who bade men everywhere seek not to be revenged upon their enemies, but to treat them kindly.

III

Although King Saul had been fighting the Philistines for many years, he was not able to drive them out of the country, of which they kept possession with strong castles full of fighting-men. Now Jonathan, the king's son, was old enough to be one of his chiefs, and he was greatly liked by the people. He had attacked fort Geba, and killed the Philistine garrison, and once more the Philistine tribes were coming to punish the men of Israel with fire and sword. King Saul blew the trumpets of alarm among the hills and valleys, and sent runners into the villages to gather all the fighting-men round him at Gilgal, down by the banks of the Jordan. And so war broke out afresh.

Up the long valleys from the sea the Philistines

came with their chariots, horsemen, and foot soldiers, armed with swords and spears, and their bowmen with shields of bull-hide. The men of Israel said they were like the sand of the sea for multitude, as they saw them coming over the ridge of the hills, and putting up their hundreds of black tents at Michmash, at the head of the gorge leading down to Gilgal. When the men of Benjamin saw the Philistine army, they hid in caves and woods, old watercisterns, thickets, and cliffs; some even flying across the Jordan at the shallow fords, to hide among the hills of Gilead on the other side. Of King Saul's three thousand chosen men only about six hundred remained to fight, for they had very poor weapons, their conquerors having taken away their swords.

But still this fighting king went up the long vale of Achor to meet the invaders, taking his sons with him. Samuel, the aged prophet, kept in his own village of Gibeah; but King Saul and his men went three miles nearer to the Philistine camp. Stopping at Geba — the crag of acacia trees — at the end of a rocky pass, Saul looked at Michmash — the crag of shining rock — only two miles off, at the other end. And there the two armies waited in their strongholds, within sight of each other, while the Philistines sent out three bands of men to plunder the country

in different directions, and the king was powerless to stop them.

Saul's large tent was spread out at Migron, under a pomegranate tree that rose like a tower of crimson in spring, and covered the ground with russet fruit in autumn; and he waited there from day to day. But Prince Jonathan grew impatient, and it fell upon a day that he bade his young armor-bearer follow him with his shield and sword and brass-headed spear; but he did not tell his father where he was going. The two men, with sandals strapped on their feet, went down the long rocky pass, their tunics drawn up through their leather belts, ready for a fight. Climbing up the shining crag on hands and knees, they surprised the men on guard; and their cries alarmed the men in the camp, who thought they were attacked by many warriors, and fled for safety, and the watchers on King Saul's crag saw them running. Then King Saul grasped his spear, and called for the checkered ephod and the breast-plate with the tribal gems; and while the priest stood gazing into the gems of light and truth, to learn what the king should do, the noise in the Philistine camp increased. Now there were Israelite slaves in the camp at Michmash; and when they saw Prince Jonathan and his man, and the Philistines running away, they thought

now was their chance, and turning against their masters killed them.

King Saul commanded all his fighting-men to hasten down and attack the Philistine camp, shouting with an oath that no man must stop for food as long as there was daylight to slay their enemies; and with fierce yells the tribesmen ran down the gorge, and fell upon the flying Philistines. Then the Israelites who were hiding in caves and dens came out and fell upon the Philistines also as they fled up to the head of the valley, over the ridge of hills, and past the upper and lower villages of Beth-horon, on their way to their own land, closely followed by the tribesmen through rocks and glens, streams and woods, Jonathan leading the chase.

It was the time of the honey harvest, and as they were running through a wood they saw marks of honey upon the ground. The wild bees, in the trunks of fallen trees and in the clefts of the rocks had filled their hives so full that the honey was dropping out; for in that land some honeycombs are so large that men dig them out with spades. Jonathan's men were hungry and tired with the chase, and longed to eat the honey, but they were afraid of the king's oath. But Jonathan himself was on the shining crag when his father shouted the command, and he did not hear it; and seeing the

golden honey dripping down, he stopped, and turning the handle of his spear, thrust it up into a cleft where the honeycomb was, and brought it out dripping with sweetness. Skimming the honey off with his hand, he ate it until his hunger ceased, and he felt strong again. His men were astonished, and told him of his father's command ; but he cared not, and said it would have been better if the king had let them eat and be strong. But although they were faint with hunger, the young men would not touch the honey, for they were afraid of the king, and continued their pursuit of the Philistines, chasing them across the Gazelle valley, and up to the town of Ajalon. Driven like sheep, the Philistines crowded through the low arch at the gate, for they did not feel safe until they were inside stone walls ; and then the men of Israel turned back, having pursued their old enemies for seventy-five miles from Michmash.

And thus, led by Jonathan, the men of Israel chased the Philistines out of the country to the gates of their own city ; but that was not to be the end of the fighting, for they would come back again to slay and plunder and burn.

IV

The sun was setting with a track of crimson on the waves of the great sea when the men of Israel returned up the wide valley from the town of Ajalon, into which they had driven the Philistines; and they watched with impatience the scarlet edges of the clouds growing dim, for the hour was drawing near when at last they might eat and drink, according to the king's command. They flew upon the spoil of the Philistines. Some killed bulls, calves, and sheep, while others kindled fires to roast the meat; for the night was to be one of feasting and rejoicing over their great victory. The camp fires blazed up to the sky with showers of sparks as heaps of dry thorns were flung upon them, and the tall King Saul himself, carrying his battle spear, and wrapped in his cloak of blue, walked through among the people. As he went, he heard that the young men had not taken time to kill the animals in the way commanded by the law of Moses; and he was very angry, and ordered that none of the meat was to be eaten, but that other animals were to be brought, and killed upon a large flat stone in the proper way. A suitable stone was quickly found, and while some killed the beasts, others heaped up the fires afresh, and

the stars covered the dark skies before the feast began; and then, with dusky faces round the blazing fires, the young men danced and revelled, and lay down to sleep until the red dawn.

King Saul wished to cross the Gazelle valley again, and attack the men of Ajalon by night; but Ahijah the priest would not say that God would be with them, and this so troubled the king that he would not go, for he believed there was something wrong. Standing with his spear in his hand at the door of his dark tent, he called his chiefs before him, and sternly demanded which of them had done wrong that day, saying with an oath that whoever did so must die, even if it were his own son Jonathan. The fighting-men gathered round also, and stood, a crowd of dark faces and strong limbs, behind their chiefs. There was silence after the king spoke, for no one replied.

“Stand ye all on one side,” he said in a voice of anger, waving his hand, “and Jonathan and I will stand on the other side, and we shall see!”

“Do whatever seems good to the king,” the chiefs replied, as they passed over to Saul’s left hand. In grim silence the king drew lots between them, and to his amazement he and his son were taken. He drew again, and Jonathan was taken.

“Tell me what thou hast done,” he demanded sternly of his son. And the throng of fighting-men crowded close to hear the answer.

“I did indeed taste a little honey with the end of my rod that was in mine hand, and must I die for that?” was Jonathan’s proud reply.

The answer was good, and the young men felt for their knives. Now whether King Saul flew into a passion with his son for speaking thus of his command, or whether he wished to show the people that his word must be obeyed, or thought he would please God by keeping his foolish oath, we do not know, but he answered loudly, so that all the men heard, —

“May God do so to me, and more; for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan!”

Kings are but men, and many warriors standing there that day had known Saul when he was only a farmer, like one of themselves; and a hoarse murmur of disappointment and anger rose from the mass of young men, who thronged closer, with hands on their clubs and knives, as they surrounded the tall king, crying, —

“Shall Jonathan die? Shall Jonathan die, who has so greatly saved Israel? God forbid it! As sure as God lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has walked with God this day!”

By this time Jonathan's companions were standing between him and the king, defying Saul to touch his much-loved son. The gloomy king looked on, and did not move as they took their favorite away, rescuing him from his father's own hand. Nor do we think that King Saul was sorry to see him go, for he loved Jonathan, and had no wish to kill him.

Driving the cattle before them, and laden with the Philistine weapons and plunder, the men of Israel went trailing in a long line of camels and men up the broad valley and over the hills again to their own towns and villages, rejoicing that they had punished their old enemies. And we may be sure that while Saul the king was deeply annoyed when his chiefs defied him and rescued Jonathan, by the time that he was back again in Gilgal his anger had given way to satisfaction that his boy was so beloved by the fighting-men that they would risk their lives for his sake.

And thus we see King Saul violent and wilful, ruling with harshness, and binding himself by foolish oaths to do things which he could not carry out; and yet he served God still.

V

The aged prophet Samuel lived among his young men on the little hill of Ramah, at the head of the vale of Achor, mourning because of King Saul's disobedience. But there came a time when he believed God told him, perhaps in a vision, to mourn no longer. He was to fill a small horn of specially prepared oil, and go to the village of Bethlehem, and there anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king; but he was afraid to go, lest King Saul should hear of it and kill him. Hiding the little horn of scented oil in his tunic, he left Ramah early in the morning, riding on an ass, with a young man driving a cow behind him; for he gave out that he was going to make a sacrifice somewhere. Their road was up to the ridge of the bare Judean hills, and southwards past the site of Jerusalem, and on by the camel road into the Hebron hills. It was a long ride, in hot autumn weather, along these stony paths, and on their way they passed Rachel's white tomb by the wayside, whither pilgrims had come to pray for hundreds of years, and whither they came still.

From the walls of the little town of Bethlehem the house of bread — the watchmen could see the blue waters of the Dead Sea, and beyond it the

coppery hills of Moab, and along the yellow valley towards Jerusalem. They saw Samuel, while yet a long way off, riding slowly up the rough path, with his servant driving a cow before him, and they were alarmed; for the old prophet was the judge of the land. And the chief men of the place hastened out through the gate in the wall to meet him, and inquire if he came in peace. He answered that he had come to burn a sacrifice, and bade them hasten and wash themselves in the stream, and put on clean clothing, that they might join him in it. Riding through the low arch in the walls, he inquired for Jesse, a well-to-do man of the place, with hundreds of flocks and herds; and when he found him, he ordered him and his sons to wash and dress and come to the feast also. Jesse thought he was highly honored, for he had eight sons who were all fighting-men and he was pleased that they should show themselves off in their best tunics before the great prophet.

A fire of sticks was kindled upon the flat rock at the high place for sacrifices outside the village walls, and the prophet killed the cow he had brought, and cut it to pieces for burning. Putting part of it upon the wood, as the old man raised his hands to heaven the flames leaped up and burnt the flesh; while the men of the village stood round him in their rough cloaks and striped ker-

chiefs, looking on in silence at this solemn act of worship. Women in their tunics of coarse blue and red, with strings of coins in their dark hair, stood apart, at a distance; for they were not allowed to share in the **sacrifices of the men**. The feasts was to come next, at which the women would be allowed to serve the men; but before Samuel would permit it to begin, there was something that must be done first. Calling Jesse to him, he said that he wished to see his sons. Jesse knew that something important was about to happen; but the people did not know, and wondered why the feast was delayed, and what it all meant when Jesse called his sons forward by their names, and bade them walk slowly, one at a time, past the prophet. First came Eliab, the eldest, in striped cloak and gray tunic, carrying his thick war spear in his hand; and when Samuel saw his height and his fine face, he said,—

“Here surely is the chosen king;” but God said to him, “Nay, I have rejected him. God sees not as man sees; for man looks upon the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart.” And Samuel told Jesse that Eliab was not chosen, and he passed on. Then Jesse called up Abinadab, his second son, who walked slowly past the prophet, with sweeping cloak and club in hand, armed for the fight.

“Neither had God chosen this,” Samuel said to the father; and Abinadab passed on. Jesse then called forward Shammah, who also walked past the old prophet with head erect, spear in hand, hoping that he would be chosen.

“Neither hath God chosen this,” was all that the grim old man said of Shammah. The people sat in the sunshine, on the slope of the hill, outside the village walls, shading their faces and looking on in silence, until all Jesse’s seven sons, dressed and armed like chieftains, had gone slowly past the old man with the keen black eye and prophet’s hairy mantle; but he made no movement, and Jesse was deeply disappointed.

“God hath not chosen these. Are all thy children here? Samuel asked, turning sharply to the shepherd, who trembled as he replied, —

“There remains yet David; but he is my youngest son, and is watching the sheep.” David was too young to be thought of as a fighting-man. He was down in the hollow with stick and dog and sling, playing upon his guitar, and watching from afar the fire and smoke and crowds, as he kept his father’s flocks together, while his brothers went to the feasting and dancing.

“Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down to the feast until he comes,” was the stern reply. No David, no feast! His brothers were annoyed

at this useless waste of time, and one of them was soon leaping down the stony path to the valley, shouting with hand to mouth, and waving a stick in the air, to attract his brother's attention. The people waited in the sunshine, and soon they saw David, with his tunic pulled through his leather belt, to leave his legs free, running swiftly up the hill, for he was very strong. He came in his herd's tattered and soiled garb, and had to wash and dress at the brook before he was fit to stand before the prophet.

When at length he appeared, Samuel saw a young man, not tall, but of great strength, with light hair, ruddy cheeks, and bright eyes, and he thought the youth goodly to look upon, and of a beautiful countenance, as he stood before him dressed in striped tunic and leather girdle, from which hung his shepherd's club, sling, and knife. Samuel looked at his open countenance, and God said to him, —

“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” Going forward, he bade the shepherd youth kneel down and uncover his head. And David did so, taking off his bright kerchief, not knowing what was about to happen. Raising his horn before the astonished people, Samuel poured the fragrant oil upon the young man's head, saying, as he did so, that God had chosen this youth to be a prince in

Israel. The people shouted with joy, and then Samuel gave the signal for the feast that was to follow; and the men all sat down on the ground about the large wood-fire, and the women came forward to serve them.

Like Saul at Ramah, David the beloved would have the place of honor at the old prophet's side, and have the choicest piece of the roasted cow placed in his hand; while the young men of Bethlehem feasted, sang, and danced round the red fires, rejoicing until the stars appeared on the hills.

From that day the Spirit of God was in David, and he soon went to live with Samuel at Ramah, where he learned reading, writing, music, and other things, which the old prophet thought he ought to know, although he would not be a king for many years to come.

And you will remember God's word of guidance to the old prophet, as Jesse's sons were passing before him, that we are not to judge people by the outward appearance, but by their goodness of heart, for Jesus says that out of a good heart come good things.

Robert Bird.

The Story of David

I

DAVID, the ruddy shepherd of Bethlehem, was not a boy when the aged prophet Samuel called him up from his sheep to pour scented oil upon his head, and tell him, before all the people of the village, that he would be a prince in the land. He was already a village hero, for he had killed a lion that sprang out upon his sheep as they fed in the valley to the south, near the desert country, killing it with his shepherd's club and knife. He also killed in the same way a bear that tried to seize his young lambs; for David was so strong that he could break an iron bow with his hands, and so swift on his feet that he could catch a wild deer in a race over good ground. He was not so tall as his fighting brothers, but he was stronger, and knew how to use the sword, bow, club, sling, and spear; for all the young men of the village learned the use of arms in their sports and games. He was also fond of music, and could play and sing. Sitting in the shade of a crimson-flowered pomegranate or a shadowy rock, or in the mouth of a dark cave, as he watched his sheep straying to and

fro in the sunshine he played strange music upon a rude harp made by himself of wood and gut-strings, and sang wild and plaintive songs of his own about the white flocks and herds, the green hills and cool streams, the red-cheeked women at the well, and the young men of the village, their loves and their battles. He was called the "sweet singer," and his skill on the harp was well known in the glens and villages.

When he left Bethlehem and went to live with Samuel's young men at Ramah, to learn to read and write, he learned also to play upon the pipe and guitar, the tambourine and large harp, and to sing, not songs of love and war, but praises of God and of His goodness to men. Under the teaching of Samuel, his heart opened towards God as a flower to the sun. Yet he did not always live at Ramah, but often came back to his home, to help his father, and to watch the sheep with his brothers, who thought him too forward, and did not like him much.

King Saul was now very unhappy, for the aged Samuel would not see him, and he felt that God was not with him; and he had fits of madness, and then he was in deep trouble, and only music could soothe his mind. Hearing that a harper was wanted for the king, one of David's friends praised his playing, his wisdom, his bravery, and

his good looks, saying that God was with him; and when King Saul heard this, he sent a messenger to Bethlehem for the shepherd-harper. No one ever came before the king without a gift in his hand, and Jesse sent with David an ass laden with a sack of wheat, a kid, and a skin of wine, as a present to King Saul.

With ruddy cheeks and his long light hair falling upon his blue tunic, David pleased the gloomy king as he stood before him; and when he played softly upon the harp, and sang shepherd songs of love, passing into praises of God, the king loved the youth greatly, and sent word to his father that he would keep David beside him. Jonathan, the king's son, and Michal, the king's daughter, also loved the shepherd-singer as he went out and in before the king. And Saul made him one of his fighting chiefs, who stood daily before him; and whenever his madness came upon the king, he called for the shepherd-harper, and David played music sad and gay until the cloud passed from the king's mind. And sometimes David lived at Gibeah, where the king's house was, and sometimes at Bethlehem; and always once a year he went home to the great family feast of the new moon, when all his father's relations were there.

The struggle between King Saul and the Philistine tribes never ceased; for the Philistines were

determined to keep the men of Israel as their servants, and King Saul was determined his people should be free. Once more the tribes by the sea gathered their young men, and came, with their battle-flags and drums, straggling up the great vale of Elah, the valley of oaks, to attack Saul's people. Stopping at the village of Succoth, belonging to the men of Judah, they chose a secure place, and put up their black tents among the thick bushes, camping about ten miles from the round hill of Bethlehem. Again King Saul sent out messengers to sound the war-horns up and down the valleys, and gather his fighting-men to drive back their old enemies. Three of David's brothers grasped their spears and bows, and joined King Saul with the men of the tribe of Judah; but David remained at Bethlehem, to take care of his old father and the cattle.

In those days soldiers had to find their own food, and armies looked at each other for many days before they fought. After a time Jesse sent David with asses laden with a sack of corn and cakes for his brothers, and ten little cheeses for their captains; and David led them through the hills and down the wide glen to the camping-place opposite Succoth, where the king's men looked across the vale to their enemies on the opposite slope, with the river between. And there David

killed Goliath, the Philistine giant, with a stone from his shepherd's sling. Then with loud shouts the men of Benjamin and Judah rushed across the vale of oaks, shooting their arrows as they ran, for they were good bowmen. Scattering the Philistines, they drove them back across their own country, until they fled through the arch and into the walled town of Gath, some even running across the next valley and into the walled town of Ekron. Then the men of Benjamin and Judah returned to the Philistine camp at Succoth and spoiled it, plundering the tents, wagons, sacks, and baggage, and feasting and rejoicing over the victory, and driving off their horses and cattle, carrying everything up to their own towns and villages in the hills. And David was the hero of all the young men from that day forward.

This was the beginning of that strange mixture of horrid cruelty and of gentleness which marked the whole of David's life; for while he loved the art of song, he practised the art of war, and his songs are like his life, touched sometimes with the sweetest tenderness, sometimes with the violence of extreme hate. For he lived under the old law, when men were taught to hate their foes; but Jesus gave us a new law of love toward our enemies.

II

The tall, gloomy king sent for David, the hero of the battle of Succoth, and leaning on his spear among his chiefs, who had come with their tribesmen to drive back the Philistines, Saul told the young shepherd of Bethlehem that he must not return any more to his father's house, and that his work amongst sheep in the fields was over, for he was to be one of his chief captains. And David was glad, for he loved fighting. When Jonathan, the king's son, saw the young shepherd standing daily among the chiefs in his father's tent, he took a strong liking for him, and as time passed his soul was knit with David's, until he loved him as he loved himself. And the king was pleased that his son and David were such good friends.

One day Jonathan took David into his tent, and in there the young men promised to be friends all their lives. Now David was very poor compared with the king's son, and had only the rough clothing of a herdsman, thick and strong, but not beautiful; and Jonathan took off his fine cloak, his embroidered tunic, and his rich belt, stripping himself of everything, even to his glittering sword and bow, and put them all upon David, as if he

had been his servant, giving them to him as a present. And when the young men came out of the tent into the sunshine, both dressed like princes, the people saw that they were as brothers; and the king saw it too, and thought that Jonathan was very foolish. But the ruddy David was so strong and brave, and such a favorite with the tribesmen, that the king set him over a troop of young men; and whenever Saul went out to fight, David and his band went with him, and this greatly pleased the chiefs and the fighting-men.

King Saul was always fighting with his old enemies the Philistines, who came up at certain seasons of the year to plunder the land, and had to be chased down the long valleys, and back into their walled towns again; and with David's help the king was able to beat them as he had never done before. And each time they drove the Philistines down, the young men returned leaping, running, dancing, and showing off their skill and strength by the way; and the villagers came to meet them and rejoice also. After one of these fights, as the tribesmen came back, with David riding beside the tall, dark king, the young women of the towns came out and danced before them on the road. Beating their tambourines and rattling their castanets, they shouted wild songs in praise of the fighting-men, singing and answer-

ing each other turn about. King Saul listened, and his brows grew dark as he heard them praising his young captain more than himself.

“Saul hath slain his thousands,” sang one band.

“And David his ten thousands,” answered another.

These girls little dreamed what harm they were doing with their foolish songs. David was pleased with the praise of the young women; but as the tall king rode on he grew more angry, saying to himself as he spurred his horse, —

“What more can he have but the kingdom itself?” And he eyed David from that day forward, to see whether he was aiming at being king.

King Saul’s madness returned from time to time, and he raved in his house at Gibeah; and day after day the ruddy David stood before him, playing upon his harp and singing the king’s praises, but Saul would not listen. David’s music did not make him well now, but rather worse, for he was full of suspicion of his young chieftain, and hated the sight of him. But the king’s friends thought David’s music was the best thing to do the king good. The dark-faced king was never without a weapon near his hand, for they were all fighting-men about him; and holding his long spear, he sat and listened to the shepherd-harper with changing emotions, for he sometimes liked David, and some-

times cursed him. Twice he seized a little spear and flung it at him, saying he would smite him to the wall; but his aim was bad. Perhaps he did not mean to hit him, for David avoided the weapon and ran out. The dark king next became afraid of his young captain. Wishing him out of his sight, he set him over one thousand fighting-men, and bade him live with them at a distance. But the men of Benjamin and Judah liked David more than ever.

King Saul now wished that David was dead, but he did not like to kill him, so he planned a way to get him killed. He offered him his daughter Merab for a wife, if he would go down the hills and attack the Philistines in their own country; and he hoped they would kill him. David had no wish to marry Merab, but he loved fighting, and went willingly, and fought with the Philistines, and came back alive. But Saul broke his promise, and gave Merab to another man, who gave him a rich present, as was the custom for a king's daughter; and David was not sorry, for Michal, Merab's younger sister, loved the ruddy shepherd, and he loved her. Saul was pleased when he heard of this; for he hoped David would be willing to go into greater danger to get Michal. And he sent a messenger to tell David that he was pleased with him, and would like him to marry Michal, and that



Saul Attempts the Life of David

as he was too poor to give the king a present he would not ask for money. But if he would kill one hundred Philistines within a certain time, that would stand for a present, which was a horrid way to buy a wife. We are not told what Michal thought of this revolting bargain, for Saul believed David would be killed, but David was well pleased. Leading his young men down the long valleys to the land of the Philistines, they went about killing innocent people, until they had slain two hundred, and before the time was up he returned to Saul to tell him what he had done.

This was followed by days and nights of rejoicing among the young men of David's camp, and the women decked their hair with flowers, and danced to the sound of timbrels and castanets, as they praised the beauty and goodness of Michal, the king's daughter; and the young men leaped and shouted round the camp fires, praising David the bridegroom as a mighty man of valor. Saul sometimes loved and sometimes hated David; but he feared him, and could not break his promise. So David got Michal to be his wife; and she loved the shepherd chief, and afterwards saved his life from her angry father.

And thus the ruddy shepherd married the king's daughter; but he had great trials before him, for Saul hated him the more.

III

King Saul was still the chief of his people, although he had fits of madness. He continued to live in the house by the feathery tamarisk tree on the hill of Gibeah, and sometimes at Gilgal of the twelve stones, by the green plains at the Jordan; and Samuel, the aged prophet, lived in the town of Ramah. There he gathered young men round him, teaching them the commandments of Moses, and how to sing and play upon instruments; and this was the only school in all the land.

David loved fighting and adventure, and when the five Philistine chiefs gathered their tribesmen, and came up the hills to attack the men of Judah and Benjamin, he was one of the chiefs who gathered their young men and offered to fight for Saul; but although he was perhaps his best captain, the gloomy king hated him. He had been warned by Samuel, who was David's friend, that God had chosen some one else to be king, and Saul was very suspicious that this young chief, and not Jonathan his son, was marked out for the position, and he determined that this should not be, even if he had to kill David.

He sat talking gravely with his chieftains, and we can see the tall king in his purple tunic, em-

broidered at the neck and hem, with a circle of gold upon his head. He is discussing with them how he can have David killed, for he is afraid of him. Jonathan, the prince, heard what his father said, and saw that his friend's life was in danger; and leaving the king's meeting, he hastened to David's house to warn him. He told his friend that early to-morrow morning his father would send soldiers to kill him, and that he must go away and hide amongst the bushes and rocks in the glen, close to the king's favorite path, and he would see what would happen next day. When darkness came on, David stole out into the glen and hid himself amongst the long grass beside the king's path, and lay there waiting for the morning light.

When the dawn came, Jonathan asked his father to walk with him, and took him out of the town by the gate in the wall, and into the open country amongst the fields and trees; and David saw the tall king with gold rings on his arms and legs, using his long spear as a staff, as he came by his favorite walk down the glen leaning upon Jonathan's shoulder, who carried a bow and arrow, and they were talking as they went. Jonathan asked his father not to kill David, as he had proposed to the chiefs last night, and reminded him that the young chief had never done anything against the

king, but had helped them greatly against their enemies the Philistines. He sang and played upon his harp so sweetly that he often charmed away the king's illness, adding that Saul himself had rejoiced over David's victories in battle. The king listened, angrily at first, until one good thing after another was brought to mind about David, and he was moved; and when he remembered that his son was pleading for a companion whom he loved and might well have hated, he wondered at Jonathan's folly, and at length yielded, promising not to kill David.

Putting his hands to his mouth, Jonathan gave a loud shout that made the valley ring, and, to the king's surprise, David rose up amongst the yellow grass, a little way off, where he had been hiding, and running towards them, knelt at the king's feet. And Jonathan told him of his father's promise; and the king looked sternly at them both, for he saw that there was a plot between them. He commanded David to return from the separate camp to which he had sent him, and come and live with the other chiefs round the king's house at Gibeah. Then Saul and Jonathan went back by the pathway to the town, and David hastened to his own house to tell Michal his wife that they must go again to Gibeah. Thus, through Jonathan's kindness, Saul was reconciled to David again.

Again the Philistines came up the hills from the sea, shouting as they drove their war-chariot, and armed with bows, swords, and spears to attack the men of Benjamin; and David blew his horn, and gathering his fighting men, chased them back into their own country. And when peace was restored, he stood before the gloomy king again, singing and playing upon his harp when his fits of madness came upon him, to cheer and amuse him. As Saul gazed at the ruddy young man he remembered his victories and the songs of the women, and his jealousy and hatred returned; and seizing his javelin, he threw it at the harper with all his might, intending to kill him at a blow. But the young man was too quick for him, and sprang sharply on one side, so that the brass-headed spear struck the wooden wall, and remained fixed there. David fled out of the king's house, and kept away, hoping that his mad anger would pass off; but it did not, for the gloomy king gave orders that his men were to watch David's house and kill him with their swords when he came out of his door in the morning.

But Michal was a king's daughter, and she heard in her father's house what was ordered to be done. Perhaps her brother Jonathan told her, perhaps she heard her father's voice raging against her husband; anyhow she left the house, and has-

tening home told David that if he did not escape that night he would be killed in the morning. She loved him, and with dark, flashing eyes, said that the door of their house was already watched by armed men, for her father was determined he should not escape this time.

Michal could go out and in for water and fuel and anything she wanted, although David could not, and she examined all round the house, and saw that the men were watching the front, where the door was, but not the back. Returning inside, she took a strong camel rope, and fastening one end to a post, she let David down quickly over the back window. With tears in her eyes, she watched him running away with great speed — for he was a swift runner, flying for his life — and saw him disappear amongst the tall grass; for he had nothing to encumber him, having left his cloak and sword and all his armor behind.

And thus we see the brother and sister, Jonathan and Michal, reasoning with their father the king, when he was overcome with rage, and saving David's life, although they knew it would bring the king's anger down upon themselves.

IV

Michal, the king's daughter, looked out from her window at the back of the house, to see if all went well with David her husband in his flight. The sun set in gold and crimson over the ridge of the hills, and the shadows deepened in the vale of Achor towards the Jordan, but it was not until the stars glittered over the heavens that she felt he was safe. But what if the men watching the door should come in to search the house, and find that he was gone? They would chase him on camels, and bring him back tied hand and foot. She must prevent it. Looking about her, she saw the teraphim above the door — hideous wooden images shaped like a man, without arms or legs — put up there to frighten harm away and bring good luck, just as a stableman nails up a horseshoe on the stable. In other lands these blocks of wood were worshipped and prayed to, but Michal and her husband worshipped God.

Taking down the black image, she considered how she could make it look like David asleep. It had no hair; and taking a black goatskin mat from the floor, she tied it over the image's head, and laid it on David's bed in a dark corner of the

room, where it could not be clearly seen. Adding something to the figure to give it the shape of a man, she covered it over with her husband's brown cloak which he used for a blanket, leaving the dark goat's hair sticking out at the top. It looked very like some one asleep. David's tunic and kerchief, belt and sandals, she laid at the bedside as if he had just taken them off, with a sword, bow, and spear close at hand. Then she lay down to rest until the morning.

When the light of the rising sun came over the hills, she rose, dressed, and went out and in as usual for water and wood, and noticed that the watchers were still there. The men waited and waited, but no David came out. They sent word to the king, who was impatient; and thinking that David was taking a very long sleep, he ordered the men to go in and bring him at once. The men gave the king's message, and Michal told them that it could not be, for her husband was very sick. When the men came in to see for themselves she bade them be quiet, and showed them the hairy head on the pillow of the bed in the dark room; and they went back to the king and told him that David was very ill, and that they had seen him lying quite still in bed. But this did not satisfy Saul's sullen rage. He ordered them to go back and bring David in his bed if he was not fit

to walk, that he might kill him with his own hands.

The men returned to Michal with the king's message. By this time the day was advancing, David the fugitive was safe beyond pursuit, and she did not need to keep up the deception any longer. The men came in again, and she took them to the side of the bed — a thick mat on the floor — and, with a laugh, bade them carry her husband to the king; and when they came to lift the mat, they were astonished to find that it contained only a wooden image with a goatskin head. David was gone, and the king's young daughter laughed again, and bade them go and tell her father that David was away; for she was proud, and loved him, and had no fear of the king.

They took the dark-eyed Michal to her father, and he demanded why she had deceived him and let David escape. But he hardly expected a truthful answer, for he knew that this girl loved her husband. And she answered, with a smile on her ruddy lips, that David had said, "Let me go, or I will kill thee!" But Saul did not believe her. The idea of Michal trying to hold her husband that her father might come and kill him was too strange for Saul to believe, and he saw that she was mocking him. The king knew the proud temper of the dark-haired girl, and that she had helped her

husband to escape, and he did no more at that time to find David; but he punished her by giving her to Phaltiel, one of his chiefs, as a wife — a very cruel thing to do.

David pulled his tunic through his leather belt, tightening it as he ran over the hills to his old friend Samuel at Ramah, not many miles away, to tell him what Saul had done, and he remained there among the young men, who lived in little houses round about the prophet's hill. The old prophet taught them to read and write, and sing and play, and told them the history of their people and the commandments of Moses; and as King Saul was afraid of Samuel, David was safe while he stayed there. Three times the gloomy king sent men, who demanded David to be given up; but Samuel met them, with his young men playing instruments and singing the songs of God that he had taught them, and each time the messengers of the king joined in the singing, and went away without David. And one day Saul came to Ramah himself; but when he saw the aged prophet and the young men singing, something of his old spirit returned, mingled with madness, and he also joined in their songs, shouting and singing more wildly than any one else, to the amazement of the men who came with him.

And thus Michal saved David's life from the

anger of her father, and was punished for his sake; but we shall see that while David loved her, he was not always so kind or grateful to her when he became king as we should have liked him to be.

V

King Saul joined Samuel's young men at the little town of Ramah, and sang songs in a wild way, as he used to do when he was a farmer; but David did not trust him, and was always on guard, lest he should cast the javelin at him which he carried in his hand as a shepherd carries his staff. The old prophet soon persuaded the king to give up his intention of killing David, but he also advised David to quietly leave the place.

Hastening to the king's hill of Gibeah, David found Jonathan, who was like a brother to him, and told him why he had fled from his home to Samuel at Ramah, and that Saul had followed him, and he asked Jonathan to tell him truly what was the thing for which his father wished to take his life. Jonathan replied that the king kept no secrets from him, and he was sure he did not now wish to kill him. But that did not satisfy David, who replied that the king knew how Jonathan loved him, and had kept this secret back, for

truly there was but a step between him and death. Then Jonathan asked what he wished him to do.

“To-morrow is the feast of the new moon,” David replied, “and I ought to sit with the other chiefs at the king’s table. Let me go that I may hide in the open country until the evening of the third day, when the feast is over; and if your father asks for me, say that I earnestly sought leave of you that I might run to mine own town of Bethlehem, to be at the yearly feast of all my father’s family.” This, of course, was a falsehood; but we shall find that David was not careful to tell the truth if a falsehood would help him — a thing that we detest; and the reason is that he lived in rude times, when cunning was more admired than truthfulness.

“If the king says it is well,” he continued, “then I shall have peace; but if he is angry, know then that he is determined to kill me.” David was in Jonathan’s power, for Jonathan was a prince. With a shout and a blast of his horn he could have had him seized and bound. “Deal kindly with me,” David continued, “for we have made a promise before God of friendship together. If I deserve death, kill me yourself, but do not carry me to your father.” Jonathan replied that such a thought was far from him, and if he knew that



David and Jonathan

Saul had again resolved upon killing him, he would tell him at once. And as they talked, David asked who would bring him word of danger if Saul answered Jonathan roughly.

There were others in the house who might hear what was being said, and Jonathan's reply was to bid David follow him; and he turned and went out into the street and through the lanes of the town, passing out by the strong gate in the walls, and then they were alone in the open country of rocks, trees, and grass. There they had a long talk, perhaps walking together along the path through the hills, perhaps sitting in the shade of a rock or under a thick oak tree, for it was hot autumn. Jonathan said he would himself tell David if there was any danger; and he made David promise, by all the love which Jonathan had for him, that, whatever happened, they and their children would always be friends. He went on to say that Saul would certainly miss David from the new-moon feast to-morrow, for his seat would be empty, and that he must hide not too far away until the next day. He was then to hasten down the valley until he came to the rock of Ezel, and wait there for Jonathan, who would come and shoot three arrows at the stone, and send a boy for them. If Jonathan shouted to the boy that the arrows were on this side, it would mean peace to David;

but if he shouted that the arrows were beyond, it would mean danger.

So the friends parted, and David hid himself in the open country, and heard the hundred horns being blown up in the hill to the new moon on the evening of New Year's Day, when King Saul was having his moon feast with all his chiefs around him. The dusky king saw that David's seat was empty, but said nothing, thinking something had befallen him; and he and his chieftains ate and drank under the stars and the silver moon, and slept that night in their tents, while David lay out in the fields alone.

And thus Jonathan took David's part, because he thought his father was doing very wrong in seeking to kill him, although he believed that David would be the next king instead of himself.

VI

King Saul and his chiefs gathered on the hill-top for the second day's feasting as soon as the silver hoop of the new moon appeared in the violet sky, and again David's seat was empty; and this time the king asked Jonathan the prince why he was not there. Jonathan answered that David had been commanded by his eldest brother to go to their family feast at Bethlehem, and he had given him leave to go and see his brothers. On

hearing this, Saul flew into a sudden passion against David and Jonathan, calling the prince a perverse and rebellious son, and saying he had made a friend of David to his own shame, for as long as David lived upon the earth Jonathan could not be certain of being king of Israel. And he ordered him to send men and bring David, that he might be put to death. The chiefs sat in a circle with gloomy faces, seeing the king's wild rage against their favorite prince. Would they have to rescue Jonathan again from his father's wrath?"

"Why should David be put to death?" Jonathan replied firmly. "What harm has he done?" Saul was too enraged to answer; and gripping his javelin he shook it at his son as if he would strike him, and bade him begone. In silence and fierce anger the prince rose and left the feast, affronted before all the chiefs, and men's dark eyes gleamed dangerously as they looked at the furious king. Jonathan now knew that the king had again resolved to kill his friend, and he grieved that his father should have spoken thus of David and himself before all the people.

The sullen king, with the ring of gold upon his head, ate and drank with his chiefs, and men sang and danced round the bush-fires in the night, until the new moon slipped out of sight and the skies were golden with the dawn. By that time

Prince Jonathan was out and going down the long valley with his purple cloak flying in the wind as he strode on, spear in hand, his boy following with his bow and arrows. The sun that poured gold over the woods of Gilead lit up the dusky face of the man who loved David with love greater than that of a woman; for he knew that David was to be king in his stead, and yet he loved him.

When he was within shooting distance of the stone of Ezel, Jonathan took his bow from the boy, and fitting a slender arrow on the string, bade him run forward quickly. And while the boy ran through the withered grass a feathered arrow sang over his head, and another, and yet another, as Jonathan drew his bow, falling to the ground far beyond, for the prince was a strong archer. When the boy reached the spot, the prince put his hand to his mouth and shouted loudly, —

“Is not the arrow beyond thee?” And the echo of his cry rang through the valley.

“Make haste, and stay not!” Again the rocks echoed his call, and David heard and understood; but the boy knew nothing, and gathering up the arrows, he brought them back to the prince. Handing him his long-bow and quiver of arrows Jonathan bade him run back with them to the town. As soon as he was gone, David rose out of the grass toward the south, where he had been

lying, and came towards Jonathan; and they kissed each other and wept, for in those days men wept when they were glad or grieved, as children do. There they talked and parted — David to hasten away to his friends, knowing that Saul would send out men to hunt him; Jonathan to return, sorrowful and angry, back to the town of Gibeah and his enraged father, not knowing what would happen. Perhaps the king's anger would have gone down after his sleep of the night, or perhaps he would cast his brass-headed spear at him, intending to kill him this time, when he said that he had not sent men to take David, and would not.

And thus in his anger the mad king threatened to kill his son, because he spoke well of David his enemy, and drove him away from the feast where all their friends were sitting. But Jonathan loved his father, and forgave him, for he believed that love was greater than thrones and stronger than kings.

VII

King Saul kept the three days' festival of the new moon with his chiefs at Gibeah amid trumpet-blowing, feasting, and dancing; while David fled from the valley below, and did not return, for his life was in greater danger than ever. When Saul heard of his flight he sent out armed men, who

hunted him up and down the country, in all the wild and rocky places upon the mountains between the shores of the Dead Sea and the Philistine plains. This time David did not fly to his old friend the prophet Samuel, but went over the ridge of hills to the priests' town of Nob, where about a hundred priests lived in a village with their wives and little children. The large tent of the tabernacle, with its purple curtains, was kept there as a home for the golden ark and a place for the people to burn sacrifices, as they used to do on the hill of Shiloh, before the Philistines burned the tabernacle there. Ahimelech was the head priest, and David went to him and told him a falsehood, saying that he was traveling on king Saul's urgent business; and Ahimelech received him kindly, and gave him food and a sword, for David had no weapons.

But Doeg of Edom, Saul's chief shepherd, was in the village of Nob, and hearing of this, hastened to tell the king. David then fled to the Philistine town of Gath, far down the hills on the other side of the vale of oaks. When the Philistines recognized that he was one of Saul's fighting chiefs, they wished to capture him; but he pretended to be silly, and escaped. Wandering for about ten miles up the side of a thickly-wooded valley, he turned aside into a rocky gorge, with many caves

of sandstone, a little beyond the Philistine border, where the shepherds lived and sheltered their animals. With a few young companions, he took possession of one of those dark caverns; and as the road up the Elah valley from the Philistine plains to the hills of Judah went past the end of this gorge in the hills, he was in a good place for watching the movements of both friends and foes, and for plundering whom he would.

Bethlehem, about twelve miles up in the hills where his father lived, had been captured by Philistine raiders; and David sent word to his father and mother, and to all the members of Jesse's clan who feared Saul's vengeance, to come down to his cave. And many others who were discontented and loved fighting and adventure came also, until he had four hundred young men living with him in this cave, with walls and roof blackened with the smoke of a hundred fires — the famous cave of Adullam.

It was not long, however, until danger threatened him there, and then he did a fine thing. Taking his old father and mother, he conveyed them away on a week's journey round the end of the Dead Sea — ready to fight for them as he went — and into the strange, rocky country of Moab, where he made a bargain with the chief of the tribe to keep them safe until his troubles were over. He

stayed there also until Gad, one of the young propnets of Samuel, warned him to fly, for Saul's men were near seeking him; and David hastened up from the low country, and hid in a thick forest on the side of the Hebron hills, moving about from place to place, as he said, like a wild partridge of the hills.

Saul, the gloomy king, sat under his green tamarisk tree, with its feathery leaves and flowers of pink, grasping his spear; for it was a time of war, and Jonathan and his other chiefs were around him. Speaking loudly, he upbraided the men of Benjamin for taking David's side and keeping his hiding-place secret. Then Doeg of Edom stood forth and told the king that he had seen David some time ago on the priests' hill of Nob with Ahimelech. And this drove Saul into such a fury that he ordered men to go to Nob and slay them; and they killed eighty-five priests with their wives and little children, and destroyed the village — all because Ahimelech was kind to David, who had deceived him.

But Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons, escaped, and fled to David at Keilah, near the cave of Adullam, in the vale of oaks, and told him the sorrowful story of his father's death; and David bade him stay, saying, —

“ He that seeks your life seeks mine, and with

me you will be safe." And Abiathar joined David's men.

It was now the hot season of harvest, and David had another fight with his old enemies the Philistines. They came up in bands on a raiding expedition, to plunder the barns of Keilah, where the newly-thrashed grain was lying in golden heaps — a kind of wealth that had always to be guarded by armed men until it was safely stored away in secure places.

But David and his band of fighters issued out of their large cave and attacked the Philistine raiders as they were plundering the grain, and drove them off. After that he continued to live at his stronghold there, overlooking the rocky glen, until he heard that King Saul was coming; and then he left the place with his six hundred fighting-men, who scattered right and left to save themselves from capture, while he hastened off, with only a few companions, over the Hebron hills towards Moab again.

And thus, although David lived in wild, barbaric times, we find him caring tenderly for his old father and mother, and conveying them to a place of safety, while he himself was in great danger.

VIII

Hastening up from Keilah, in the vale of caves, David crossed the hills and hid in the wild country of Ziph, beyond the Hebron range; and King Saul, with a band of armed men, hunted for him every day among the vales and clefts of white and red sandstone, and in the dry river beds, but could not find him. And there, in a wood, David and Prince Jonathan again met secretly and had a talk, and the prince told him that his father knew that David was to be the next king.

But the men of Ziph got to know of David's whereabouts, and told King Saul, who bade them take note of the place, and if he was anywhere in the hills of Judah he would find him. But when the men of Ziph returned with the king's men to take David, he was gone. King Saul hastened after him, going from cleft to cleft of the rocky gorges, and his men drew a wide circle round David, and were gradually hemming him in, when word came that the Philistines were coming up from the sea to plunder the land, and King Saul had to abandon David and hasten back to fight them. Thus David escaped from the valley of rocks, and fled down the steps by the cliffs to Engedi, to the shore of the Dead Sea. It was a

rich spot, beautiful with light green palms and fig-trees and vines, where kings came to bathe in the hot waters of the "spring of the wild goats," that flowed from under a great stone, and ran sparkling down the rocks towards the blue lake. In these high limestone cliffs of dazzling white and yellow, brown and purple, there were deep chalk caves, and there David hid his men, looking out upon a plain of grass and flowers and tall trees, with the blue lake lying before them, and the red cliffs of Moab on the other side. There they slept, going out to hunt for food by day, and cooking it over wood fires in the caves, with a sentinel always watching on a high place to give the alarm. King Saul was angry at David's escape, and returned with three thousand men to hunt up and down the deep clefts of white rock, the narrow gorges, and over the naked ridges, and up to the wild goat-land above the cliffs of Engedi; but he could not find his hiding-place.

Then the king came down by the narrow path from the cliffs to search the flat land and the dark caves round the edge of the salt lake, and David and his men withdrew into the back of their cavern, and their spies watched King Saul and his men going to and fro outside. Coming to a sheep-pen of low stone walls, built at the mouth of a certain large cave, and thinking it was a shepherd's place,

the king went in out of the sun, perhaps to sleep during the heat of the day. But it happened to be the very cave in which David and his men were concealed, and they withdrew to the very back of it, where all was dark as night, and there they watched the king spread out his cloak and lie down.

David's men wished to rush down upon King Saul and kill him; but he held them back, and taking off his sandals, and laying everything aside but his knife, he crept noiselessly towards the sleeping king, and cutting a piece from the skirt of his purple cloak, crept stealthily back again into the back of the dark cave, and waited there to see what the king would do.

King Saul rose and went out of the dark cave into the sunshine, and the spies watched where he went, and David followed him at a distance; and when the king had passed over and there was a deep gorge between them, David stood up and shouted, —

“Ho, my lord the king!” and bowed twice, as was the custom with chiefs. Then David told the king how he had had him in his power in the cave, and that he could have killed him, as some bade him do, but that he had refused. Then calling him his father, David held up the skirt of the king's robe, which he had cut off, as a proof

that he wished King Saul no harm, although he was hunting him about like a dog, a goat, or a jumping flea. And David shouted that God would judge between them.

King Saul heard the voice shouting in the lonely place, and looking at the hem of his robe, he saw the cut part, and was deeply moved.

“Is that your voice, my son David?” he exclaimed, and tears ran down his dusky cheeks as he said, “You are more righteous than I, for you have rendered me good for evil. If a man finds his enemy, will he let him go free? May God reward you good for what you have done to me this day.” The stormy mind of the king was broken and humiliated, for David was too clever and too good for him. He also knew by this time that Samuel had anointed David to be the future king, and felt that he could not alter it, even with three thousand men. “I know,” he continued, “that you will surely be king of Israel. Swear to me, before God, that you will not kill my children after me, and take away my name!”

And David answered the king across the narrow gulf of rocks that divided them, giving the solemn promise which the old king asked — a promise which he did not altogether keep. But they did not meet and embrace. If David was asked to come across, he preferred to keep the deep gorge

between him and the changeable king, notwithstanding his tears and oaths. So King Saul led back his three thousand men to Gibeah, to sit and brood and rave under the deep green tamarisk tree, with his chiefs about him. And David took his ragged band up to the stronghold of Hachilah, by the valley of rocks, where he thought he would be safer than in the king's hill of Gibeah, within striking distance of the king's spear.

And thus although King Saul was pursuing David to drive his spear into him and take his life, when David had Saul in his power he did him no hurt, so that the distracted king said David had returned him good for evil, and was a better man than he. This we call remorse — a return to a better nature which comes over men, and fades away again, for it is not true repentance.

IX

Sitting under the shadow of the green tamarisk tree on the hill of Gibeah, his head encircled with a band of gold, and holding his brass-headed spear in his hand, the dark King Saul listened to the story of the men of Ziph, who had come thirty miles to tell him that they knew the place where David was hiding. Promising them a reward if they led him to the spot, the king called for three thousand chosen men, and started again in pur-

suit of his enemy. It would take them two days to get to the rocky country of Ziph, between the Hebron hills and the white cliffs of the Dead Sea, and there they scattered into bands, to resume the hard task of finding David among the deep clefts, the caves, and the barren peaks, while his nimble spies watched them wherever they went. The spies brought him word that King Saul was near with his men, searching everywhere. They searched all day, and at evening the king's horns sounded, calling them into his camp on the hill of Hachilah, a ridge of white and red limestone not far from the path, but divided by a deep gorge from the place where David was — a gorge without tree or bush, and scored deep with the floods of winter.

The shadows of the Hebron hills were falling over peak and cleft, and the sunlight glared red upon the cliffs beyond the Dead Sea, when David, with Ahimelech a Hittite, and Abishai his own nephew, two chosen friends, crept stealthily out from their hiding-place towards the edge of the gorge, whence they could see King Saul's men upon the opposite hill preparing their camp for the night. Hiding there, they watched until the sun went down, and saw that they had made a ring of their wagons round the king's tent, and were cooking and eating their evening meal, keeping no

guard, and not thinking that an enemy was near. They saw also that Saul's tent was in the very midst of the camp.

“Who will go down with me to the camp yonder?” David asked his friends, for he wished to spy more closely who had come out to hunt him. Abishai replied that he was ready to go. With spears in their hands and knives at their belts, the two men crept from rock to rock down the dangerous descent into the gorge, and climbed slowly up the other side; and the stars were out in the sky before they reached the top of the hill of Hachilah. With their sandals hanging at their girdles, and with naked feet, these two practised hunters crept closer and closer to the wagons, where the camp fires were burning, with men lying round them. They stopped and listened, but there was no sound to be heard. Believing themselves quite safe from attack on the top of that rugged hill, King Saul's men had lain down after their supper, and were all fast asleep, with the king's low tent in the middle, and his body-guard sleeping round him.

In whispers David told his nephew that he was going on into the very midst of the camp to see the king, and Abishai replied that he would follow him anywhere. With noiseless feet they passed, crouching and creeping, through the circle

of wagons and men who were lying round the fires wrapped in their cloaks, asleep on the ground. On they went still, until they reached the king's tent. And there lay the tall King Saul, wrapped in his purple cloak, sleeping, with Abner and his chiefs around him, his thick brass-headed spear stuck into the ground at his head, and his small water-skin at his side. And as David gazed at the king's dusky face, he pitied him; but Abishai had no pity, and his whole desire was to kill him at a blow. But David held up a warning hand, and would not allow his nephew to go any nearer, for he had other thoughts in his mind than killing the king.

And thus we see a hunted man looking into the face of his sleeping enemy, and shielding him from harm, although he himself was in danger of his life from the very man who lay asleep on the ground before him.

X

“God hath delivered him into thine hand,” whispered Abishai, as David and he crouched at the door of King Saul's black tent on the hill of Hachilah, scarce able to see him in the darkness. “Let me smite him with the spear to the earth at one stroke. I will not smite twice,” Abishai added in a low voice — meaning that he would kill the

king instantly and without a cry. It was a great temptation to David to end his troubles by one stroke of his nephew's hand.

"Destroy him not!" was the whispered reply. "God shall smite him, or he will die, or he will be killed in battle. Let us take the spear at his head, and the water-skin, and be gone." They were in great danger; and having seen King Saul, David wished to lose no time in getting away, for some of the guards might awake and shout that there were strangers in the camp.

With soft tread the two dusky figures approached the sleeping form of the old king, and drawing the tall spear noiselessly out of the ground, and taking away the kid-skin bottle from his side, they glided off like spectres in the moonlight. Nobody saw them, for their naked feet made no noise to awake any one, and a deep sleep, like a sleep from God, was upon the camp.

The sun rose in gold and crimson on the hills, and men began to move about in the camp; and when the sleeping king awoke and stretched out his hand for a drink, his water-bottle was gone. He looked for his thick spear, and it was gone also. He called angrily to his guards that some one had been in his tent; but the spear and bottle could not be found anywhere, and no one could explain the theft.

David and his friends were now safe across the gorge, and they watched the search going on from their high position among the rocks; and when the sun lit up the bare peaks of white and yellow, King Saul's men spied the three figures, and stood gazing and pointing at them in wonder. Abner, the king's cousin, and captain of his guard, stood listening, for some one was shouting his name across the ravine.

"Abner, son of Ner! Abner, son of Ner! Answerest thou not, Abner?"

"Who art thou that criest to the king?" Abner replied in a loud voice. He was the commander of the army, and feared that this was David again, for he had often heard him shouting in battle.

"Art thou not a brave man, Abner?" the voice continued. "Who is like to thee in Israel? Wherefore didst thou not keep a better watch over thy lord when there came one into the camp to destroy the king? This is not a good thing that thou hast done. Thou deservest to die for not keeping watch over the Lord's anointed king. See where the king's spear is that was at his head, and the water-skin!" And David held them up — the glittering spear and the black water-bottle, one in each hand — before the astonished guards and Abner their captain.

King Saul had now come out, and was gazing

gloomily at the three figures; and although he heard David's voice, he could not believe his ears.

"Is this thy voice, my son David?" he called in a deep tone across the gulf. David knew the king at once, for he stood head and shoulders above all the crowd.

"It is, my lord, O king," the answer came back. And David demanded to know from him what he had done that the king wished to kill him, saying that he had driven him out of the land of God's people, as if he wished him to worship idols, hunting him among the hills like a wild partridge. King Saul heard these reproaches with a bitter heart. And again his changeable mind gave way under a sense of his cruelty and folly in coming with three thousand men to chase a young hunter who could laugh at him whenever he wished.

"I have done wrong," the king cried, in sorrow of spirit. "Return, my son David; for I will no more do thee any harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day. I have played the fool, and have gone far astray" He was ashamed of himself when he thought of David's generosity.

But David was not disposed to return to the king's side of the ravine and run the risk of his fits of madness, and replied telling King Saul to

send a young man across for the spear and water-bottle, adding that God would reward every man according to his good deeds; and since he had spared the king's life that day, so he hoped God would guard his own life, and deliver him from all trouble. By this time the men of King Saul's camp had gathered in hundreds to the edge of the ravine, listening to the strange talk between the king and the fugitive, and while some feared the king, there were many who loved David.

Again King Saul spoke in one of those flashes of his old, better nature by which he was seldom visited now: "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt do great things, and succeed." And he bade a young man go over quickly for his spear and water-bottle, and ordered his men back to the camp, to prepare the wagons and start on their return home.

And for the second time the tall king led his band of armed fighters back on their long march through the hills to Gibeah, where he would live for a short time longer, sunk deeper and deeper in madness and despair, to close his life by his own sword on the battlefield of Gilboa, defeated by his lifelong foes, the Philistines.

And David went his own wandering way, gathering men about him, and fighting; soon now to be chosen king over the men of Judah, as the first step towards the kingdom of Israel.

And thus we see David generous to the man who sought his life, and how his generosity caused King Saul to put up his sword and turn humbly home-wards, ashamed of the hatred that was in his heart; for kindness turns away the anger even of those who do not love us.

XI

With torn clothes, and with dust upon his head, uttering loud cries as he went, a messenger climbed the winding, stony path up the side of the hill of Gibeah, where King Saul's house stood, shaded by the dark tamarisk tree. He could scarcely drag his weary steps up the hill, for he had hastened, running and walking, all the way from the valley of Jezreel, the bearer of sorrowful tidings. The watchers in the tower over the low gateway in the walls of the king's town saw the messenger coming, and hastened out to meet him; and when he delivered his message, they tore their clothes, and turned, shrieking as they ran back through the low arch and along the street, spreading the dreadful news.

“Saul the king is killed, and his three sons are killed, and the Philistines have scattered the Israelites in battle at Mount Gilboa!” The old men and the elders of the town, who were sitting at the gate, gathered round the messenger, and

listened as he told how the Philistines drove the Israelite army northward towards the valley of Jezreel, and that at Mount Gilboa King Saul had turned and fought a battle in which the Philistines overpowered him with their chariots and horsemen, their archers and their spearmen, and that soon the princes Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua were slain. King Saul, wounded with arrows, bleeding, and in despair, had killed himself with his own sword, rather than let his enemies take him alive. The Philistines had conquered the country again, and their warriors would soon be at the gates of the town to plunder the king's house. The news spread amongst groaning men and shrieking women and children, and old men who could not fight, and whose only hope was in flight to escape capture and death.

The news that their father was slain was quickly carried to Prince Jonathan's house, and that they must all fly if they were to escape the swords of the Philistines. The faithful nurse who was in charge of his little son Mephibosheth placed him astride her shoulder, and bidding him hold her head tight with both hands, fled from the house and down the street, and out of the town towards the rough path in the valley leading to the low country; for she believed she was saving the child's life from men who would put all the king's children

to death. But as she ran with her long robes about her, making all the haste she could, she stumbled and fell, and the little child, who was only five years old, was thrown from her shoulder, striking the stony ground so heavily that he hurt both of his feet — perhaps broke both ankles, for he was never able to walk again. Lifting the screaming child, she fled on with him down the long valley of Achor to Gilgal of the twelve stones, by the green trees of the Jordan. There she rested awhile, and then crossed the river, wading through the shallow ford. Going along the shepherds' country on the other side, she climbed up to Lo-debar, at the deeply-wooded vale of the river Jabbok, where, like a chain of roses, the crimson oleanders line the banks of the stream from the rocky falls to the trees of the Jordan. She was now safe among the hills of Gilead, near to the town of Mahanaim, to which Ish-bosheth, King Saul's youngest son, had already fled. And there, for many long years, while David and Ish-bosheth fought for the kingdom of Israel, and Ziba, the slave at Gibeah, took possession of all that belonged to Prince Jonathan, the faithful nurse watched over this little dark-eyed boy till he became a man. But he was not without another friend up in the hills; for a rich and kind chief called Machir, of the tribe of Gad, took the little

lame prince into his house and treated him as one of his own family.

And so while angry men were slaying each other, a faithful woman risked her life to save a little boy who had been entrusted to her care, and for this we love and admire her more than we do the men who fought and won those battles of long ago.

XII

David was now king over all the land, having driven out the Philistines and taken Jerusalem to be his capital; and there he built a fine house of stone, with a roof of cedar wood, and put great walls round the city with gates and towers. He also put up a tent of purple and crimson on Mount Zion for the golden ark, that it might rest in a tabernacle, as at Shiloh and at Nob, and the great tent was now ready to receive it and the other precious things.

At Kirjath-jearim on the hill, the golden ark, kept by the priests, was placed upon a wagon of new wood, and oxen, shining with oil and garlanded with flowers, were brought out into the sunshine, and fastened to the yokes and traces, and the white-robed priests and Levites stood waiting for the signal to start.

With blowing horns and crashing cymbals, rattling castanets, sounding pipes, twanging harps,

battering of hand-drums and tambourines, the golden ark started upon its way up the long valley of seven miles from Kirjath-jearim, the town in the wood, to Jerusalem on the hill, while the people shouted and the young men danced.

Many people were gathered there from all parts of the country; for the king had sent messengers throughout all the land, from the river of Egypt on the south to the river of Syria on the north, calling a council of war of all the tribes to join in the procession of priests to the great city. The ark had been kept in the house of Abinadab for twenty years, ever since it had been sent back by the Philistines, and the king made new songs of praise to God for the people to sing as they crowded round the cart with the precious box; and Abinadab's sons, Ahio and Uzzah, were appointed to lead the oxen as they toiled slowly along the stony road.

The king, with a gold band round his head and his favorite harp in his hand, went in front of the ark; and as he went he played and sang with all his might, and seeing his joy the people rejoiced, and the joyful noise of shouting and beating and blowing was very great; but it could not be called music, although it made the valley ring and pleased the people. But at Nachon's barn something went wrong. Perhaps there was a sudden

thunder-storm; for the oxen became restive, the golden ark rocked and shook on the cart, and Uzzah, who steadied it with his hand, fell dead. Suddenly the music ceased, the shouting died away, and all the people stood still. This was such a dreadful thing that the king saw in it a sign of displeasure, and was afraid of God — afraid to go on with the ark to Jerusalem, and said he would go no further. So the cart was carefully led aside into the courtyard of the house of a Levite called Obed-edom, and the golden ark was carried in to lie there. And all the people went away to their homes among the hills and valleys, not knowing what to think; and the king returned to his house on Mount Zion, and called the place the "Breaking out on Uzzah," for he said God killed Uzzah for touching the ark. But that was not the reason of Uzzah's death, and the king changed his mind about it later on, and said it was because the ark was carried upon a cart and not upon poles that the man was killed; but that was not the right reason either, and no one really knew why Uzzah died.

Jesus has taught us that God does not kill men for things like that; but in those early days the writers of history loved to give reasons for things which happened long before they came to write about them, and of which they could not be at all certain.

XIII

David left the golden ark in the home of Obed-edom, on the road to Jerusalem, to see if anything would happen; but nothing did happen, excepting that everything prospered with Obed-edom while the golden ark was there. And that is no wonder, for he would be much thought of as the keeper of the precious ark. After three months the king again determined to bring up the ark to the purple tent he had prepared for it on Mount Zion; for he now thought that Uzzah was killed, not for touching the ark, but because oxen were dragging it upon a cart instead of Levites carrying it upon poles, as Moses commanded. Perhaps the Levites or the priests told him this, for the king thoroughly believed it.

“Have not Levites the right to carry the ark of God?” the king said; and he sent out messengers to gather Levites from all parts of the country, until there were more than eight hundred camped in little black tents in the valley about the home of Obed-edom. And the king appointed what they were to do. Some were to beat the gongs and cymbals of brass, some to play the harps, and some the guitars; and Chenaniah, because he was a skillful singer, was appointed to lead the

singers; and others were chosen to carry the ark and keep the doors of the tabernacle, as Samuel had done when he was a boy. The king also gathered the priests together, and chose seven of them to walk before the ark and blow seven trumpets at different parts of the road.

Thousands of people were gathered there from all the tribes with their chiefs, and the noise of horns, trumpets, drums, cymbals, and shouting once more rang through the valley when the sons of the Levites, dressed in white robes, lifted the golden ark as Moses commanded, and carried it out of the house of Obed-edom with the poles resting on their shoulders. Everything was done according as Moses wrote. The priests were satisfied, and the king's joy was great, and he exclaimed that God was helping the Levites to carry the gold box. When they had gone only six paces along the road, the king stopped them; and commanding a bull and a ram to be brought, they were solemnly slain and burned upon a heap of wood, with all the people looking on, as an offering to God. It was a strange thing for a king to do; and we do not now think it would do any good, although it was much thought of in those dark ages. After this delay the king ordered the little gold ark to be lifted by the white-robed Levites, and the procession started again. This time the

priests, in their robes of embroidered blue and red, walked in front, blowing their brass trumpets; and the king came next to the ark, in a robe of white with an ephod of different colors, like a quilted tunic, of blue, crimson, and purple, and as he went he played upon his favorite harp, and sang and danced with all his might, and the young men did the same.

The white procession moved on amid crowds of dusky people, between fields of swaying grain in the valley and under shadowy trees, and sometimes in the open sunshine, among stones and coarse grass. Thousands of tribesmen were on each side, playing upon loud-sounding instruments; and thousands of voices shouted the king's songs as they danced upon the road in wild, barbaric fashion, as the king did; and the valley rang with the noise of the bringing up of the golden ark. The noise of singing and music died away, and broke wildly out again, many times, during the six miles' journey up the long valley; and the people of Jerusalem heard it in the distance, and came out to meet the ark; so that when the procession came through the city gate, and was inside the city walls, the noise and excitement were greater than ever, and people crowded their roofs and windows to see the dancing.

Michal, King Saul's daughter, was at her win-

dow, watching to see the golden ark brought in by the king, her husband. Wild young men, half clad, came first, leaping, dancing, shouting in a frenzy of joy, looking up to the women at the windows and on the roofs of the houses as they passed, and the king's daughter turned away her face. The narrow street was packed with a struggling, shouting throng when the golden ark came slowly into view, being carried carefully by the white-robed Levites, who went calmly on amid all the noise; while the seven blue-clad priests, pealing out upon their silver trumpets, walked gravely in front. Was that the king, her husband? Harp in hand, clad in white, he was dancing, singing, playing with all his might, like one of the young men, although he was now over forty; and she despised him in her heart, and had no smile for him when he looked up to her window.

The crowd surged up the hill of Zion to the great tent of purple and crimson; but only the hundreds of chiefs, priests, and Levites could see the golden ark being carried through the heavy curtains and placed on the gilt table, under the wings of the golden angels at the back. Then the curtains of purple, crimson, and gold were drawn, and the white-robed men went out, leaving it there in the dark.

The king ordered bulls and sheep to be slain

and burnt upon the white altar of rough stones in the courtyard before the door of the tent, and he served as a priest himself. When the people were tired of clashing brass and booming cow-horns, of psalms and smoking fires, the king stood up on a high place, and in a loud voice blessed them in the name of God, and bade them all go home. They remembered the king's blessing that day; for every man and woman in the multitude got a present of a cake of bread, some flesh or some wine, and a cake of raisins, to eat in their home and rejoice over with their families.

The people streamed down the hill of Zion, and the king also went home intending to bless all who were there. Men alone took part in the wild procession of bringing up the golden ark, and Michal, the king's wife, who had saved his life some years ago, came out to meet him, and Saul's proud daughter was angry with David, and she said with a sarcastic smile, —

“How glorious was the King of Israel this day, dancing before the women like one of the vain fellows!”

His wife's cold words made the king seem foolish, and he became very angry; for he loved music, and had been dancing in a wild, excited way, believing he was doing right. And he answered her rudely with unworthy taunts, saying that he

was dancing before God, who chose him to be king of Israel rather than her father, Saul. And some people think that King Saul's daughter was right, and that it would have been better if David had left the loud singing and the wild dancing upon the road and in the streets to the young men of his tribe, and had walked gravely and soberly, in a manner becoming a wise king.

XIV

Having defeated the Philistines in many battles, David was the firmly-established king of Israel, living in a palace in Jerusalem; while Mephibosheth, Jonathan's lame son, now a youth of seventeen, lived in the hills of Gilead. And one day a message came to the youth from the king, saying that, because of the love which he had for his father Jonathan, the king wished him to come and live like a prince in Jerusalem. The message came about in this way. One day King David exclaimed, —

“Is there not left any one alive of the family of King Saul, that I might show the kindness of God to him?” And Ziba, the slave, answered that Mephibosheth was living beside the Jabbok river, and a messenger was dispatched to him at once.

When the prince received the king's message he mounted his ass, and, with his wife and little

son Micha, rode after the king's messenger down to the Jordan and up the hills to Jerusalem, and there he knelt before King David, saying he was Jonathan's son.

"Fear not," the king said, "for I will surely be kind to thee for Jonathan thy father's sake. Thou shalt eat always at the king's table." And he called for Ziba the slave, and said that all the land which belonged to King Saul in Gibeah was to be a present to Mephibosheth, and that the slave was to plough the fields and tend the vines, and give all the fruit of the land to this lame prince. But Ziba did not like this; for he had been a free man ever since King Saul's death, and had fifteen sons and twenty slaves of his own, and they would all have to work for this lame prince. But although he did not like it, he had to do it; for whatever the king said was law.

Mephibosheth lived like one of King David's own sons, a prince in Jerusalem, for seventeen years; and then dark days came when the king himself had to fly from his palace, because of Absalom, his handsome and passionate son, who turned against him. And as the king went over Olivet, with bare feet, covering his head with his cloak for sorrow, on his way across the Jordan to the strong town of Mahanaim on the Jabbok river, Ziba the slave met him, leading forward

two asses laden with cakes, clusters of raisins, ripe figs, and a skin of wine, saying they were a present for him. King David asked for his master Mephibosheth, and the cunning slave replied with a falsehood, saying that he was waiting behind in Jerusalem, and he had heard him say, now that the king was gone, the people would give him back the kingdom of his grandfather, King Saul, and make Mephibosheth king.

King David believed the falsehood of the wily slave, and as a reward to him and a punishment to Mephibosheth he gave him all the houses, lands, fields, and vineyards of his master as a present for his faithfulness. And Ziba replied, bowing with his face to the ground, —

“I bow to thee, my lord, O king; may I find favor in thy sight!” And thus by falsehoods the slave got possession of his master’s house and garden.

When David came to the stronghold of Mahanaim in the hills of Gilead, Mephibosheth’s old friend, Machir, the shepherd of Lo-debar, met him, and brought beds and basins, dishes and wheat, barley and meal, corn and beans, lentils and pulse, honey and butter, cheese and milk, saying, —

“Thy people are hungry and weary and thirsty in this wilderness.” And this pleased the king very much.

It was not long, however, until King David was riding back again in triumph to Jerusalem amid a crowd of rejoicing people. And as he rode over the Mount of Olives, the lame prince came out to meet him, riding on an ass — a picture of woe, for he had neither washed nor oiled himself for sorrow since the day that the king fled. King David asked him sternly why he did not leave Jerusalem when all his friends left. And the prince replied that Ziba the false slave had told lies and deceived the king, because he gave orders to saddle an ass that he might ride with the king out of Jerusalem; but Ziba did not get ready the ass, and being lame, he could not do it himself, and so he was left behind.

“But,” he added, “my lord the king is as an angel of God. Do whatever you think is right. For all my father’s children are now dead, and yet you have set me to eat at your own table. What right have I to cry any more to the king for any favors?”

“Why speak any more of this matter?” replied King David, as he rode away. “I say, let thee and Ziba the slave divide the land between you.”

“Yes,” replied the lame prince joyfully. “Let him take all, since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own home.”

And as King David rode through the crowded streets of Jerusalem to the palace on Mount Zion, the lame prince rode behind him, to live in the city and dine at the king's table all his life; for he was the son of Jonathan, whose love and kindness the king would never forget.

Unkindness is always a mean thing; but when it is directed against one who is weak and lame and cannot help himself, it is shameful cruelty. And yet, from the way that the king divided the land between the slave and the prince, it makes one think that the lame man might have got an ass to ride on as the days went by, if he had been very anxious to have it.

XV

The walls of Jerusalem, the city which King David took from the Jebusites in his early fighting days, went round two hills and a deep valley, and there were many streets and houses inside. One of these hills he called Mount Zion, and on it he built what was then thought to be a very fine house of cedar wood, and he lived on that hill with his wives and children, and his officers and slaves round him. From it he could see the flat-roofed tent covered with brown and crimson skins, which he had made to hold the golden ark, that was kept in darkness behind a thick curtain at

the back, and thither he went to worship God. Having finished his house of cedar wood, he found that it was much better than a tent to live in, and thought that the ark ought to be in a house of wood also, for he did not intend that it should ever leave Jerusalem. He told his friend Nathan the prophet that he would like to build a house of stone for the ark, to be called the House of God; and the prophet was well pleased, and told him to go on with it, for God would be with him.

But when the prophet thought over it and remembered that Moses said the ark was to be kept in a tent, and had described how the tent was to be made, even to the color of the curtains, he began to doubt whether it would be right to exchange the great tent for a house of wood. And that night he dreamt a dream, in which God bade him go back to the king and say that he was not to build this house, because his hands were red with blood, for he had killed many men in war; but that his son Solomon, who would be king after him, would be a man of peace and not a fighter, and he would build a house for the ark.

When King David got this bold message from his friend Nathan he was greatly troubled, for he was anxious to build the temple; and he left his cedar house on Mount Zion, and went to the tent of the ark. Going through the heavy purple

curtains, he told the priests that he wished to be alone, and went by himself into the inner part, and sat down on the ground in darkness and silence before God. Covering his head with a blue shawl, he prayed, thanking God for making him a king, and for the message of Nathan that Solomon his son would be a great king after him, and would build a temple for the ark. Then he rose and left the tabernacle, returning alone to his house on Zion Hill.

After getting a message from his friend Nathan that killing men was highly displeasing to God, we should expect King David to repent and become a man of peace, but he did not. It is a good thing to pray well, but it is a much better thing to live well; and King David continued to fight battles and kill men, although he knew it was displeasing to God. His kingdom was large, and he wanted it larger for his son Solomon, and so he sent out his soldiers to conquer more country and slay more people.

After some years the king thought that if he might not build the temple, he could at any rate gather together the things for his son to build it with; and Nathan the prophet approved of this, although we do not see much difference between hewing the stones and building the wall. So the king gathered together the foreigners that were

in his kingdom and made them slaves, and forced them to dig stones out of the quarries and hew them into shape. He also got the men of Tyre and Sidon, by the sea, to go up into the Lebanon hills and cut down large cedar trees, and drag them to the sea and up many miles of road again to Jerusalem. These men had metal furnaces at Tyre, and he employed them to make iron nails and rings and hooks of brass, and he gathered great quantities of brass, silver, and gold, saying as he did so, —

“Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house of God must be exceedingly magnificent.”

He also told Solomon that God would not let him build the temple because he had killed so many men, shedding blood abundantly and making great wars; but that Solomon would be a man of peace and rest and quiet, and that he would build it, for he had prepared thousands of talents of gold and silver, and gathered brass and iron beyond measure, and he bade his son be strong and of good courage. He also commanded all the chieftains in his kingdom to help Solomon; and, better than all, he bade his son set his heart and soul upon obeying God, who would then be like a father to the prince when the king was dead.

Jesus taught the people that it was useless for a man to worship God if he hated his brother,

and that he must first love his brother if he would love God. And so the old king was told by Nathan that there was something terribly wrong in his life, and that it was not for a murderer to build temples to God, but that he must leave it to others whose hands were not red with the blood of their fellow-men.

XVI

Sunshine fell upon the walls of King David's castle on Mount Zion. The trees swayed and shook in the king's gardens, and the doves fluttered up to the windows; but all was hushed and still inside. Black slaves glided to and fro with naked feet, and the women took off their tinkling armlets and talked in whispers; for in a little chamber, with shaded window and curtained door, a dark-eyed mother sat watching her child — the king's child — whose flushed cheeks showed that he was very ill, as she moistened his lips with water and wine and soothed him as only a mother can. Dressed in the deep reds and purples of a king's favorite wife, she was very beautiful; and her child was even more lovely, and the king loved the little boy more than any other of his children. And when he heard that his favorite boy was very ill, the king, who was now about fifty, threw himself upon the earthen floor of his room and prayed

to God for the child with a bitter heart, for he himself had done a very wrong thing. His friends came and stood round and spoke to him; but he would not rise, nor let them raise him up, nor would he take any food. And so he passed the dark night in praying and in sorrow, while the mother watched the child by the light of a small lamp, and slaves stood outside the door to keep silence.

The morning came, and sunshine fluttered on the trees in the king's gardens and on the hills round the town. And the king inquired for the child, but the answer was that he was no better; and all the people saw that his grief was very great, and they wondered. For King David had fought in many cruel battles, and beaten his enemies, and caused the death of many men and women and children, and he had done many cruel things in his lifetime. He now had riches and honor and numerous children, and was the great king of Jerusalem, living in a castle, with servants and horses and gardens and fountains, and he had brought the golden ark of God to be near him in a purple tent on Mount Zion; but he had set his heart on this fair-haired little child, and feared he might die, and this took the joy out of everything.

The peacocks on the wall and the doves on the roof missed the little child from the garden, where

he used to come and feed them. For seven long days and seven long nights, the loving mother watched him as he lay getting slowly worse, with flushed cheeks; and the king's grief was so great that he would not rise from his earthen floor to eat by day or by night, and when his slaves spoke to him he paid no heed and would not answer. He refused to put on the fresh clothing they brought for him, or to wash in the brass basins of water held out to him, or to eat the food placed on the table at his side, but lay on the floor of his little room groaning and praying to God for the little one.

Riches and grandeur are but the outward shows of life. Kings and queens have much to give them pleasure which poor people have not got, but their hearts are of the same stuff. The queen mother sits by the side of her sick child in his bed of silk, and the king moans in his gilded room, with love and sorrow as deep and strong as the father and mother in the lowly cottage.

XVII

After a week of suffering, the little lamp of life went out in the hushed room of the king's palace at Jerusalem, and the weeping mother was led away from the bedside of her dead child. Friends went to tell the king in his chamber; but when they

came to the door of his room they stopped and whispered, saying, —

“If he would not listen to us while yet the child lived, what will his grief be if we say he is dead?” He heard them talking, and looking up, saw from their faces what had happened. He asked if the child was dead, and they told him, expecting that he would break out into wild grief; but he did not. Rising from the earthen floor, where he had lain so long, he asked for water, and his slaves washed him and brought clean, fresh clothing, and combed and oiled his hair. He spoke to no one, but went out into the sunshine and the wind; and they watched to see what he would do and where he would go. He did not linger among the walks, shaded with evergreens, of the king’s garden or by the ponds where the red lilies grew and the swans shook out their white plumes in the sun. His friends followed him as he went slowly out of the palace gardens and away to the great tent of purple and crimson, which he liked to call the tent of God, on Mount Zion; and they stopped outside when he drew the rich curtains aside and went in. There in darkness he knelt, and, with hands upraised, bowed his face to the ground before God and the ark under the wings of the golden angels as he poured out his soul in prayer.

After a time the king came out of the great tent

again, and his friends and servants followed him as he returned to his castle. He had not yet spoken, and they could not understand why he did not weep and lament for the child. He asked for food, and they wondered yet more as he ate what the slaves brought him.

“What is this that thou doest?” asked one. “While the child lived thou didst weep for him, and would take no food; and now that he is dead, thou dost rise and eat.” They thought he was only mourning, as he lay for days on the floor; but he was praying, and he answered them, —

“While he was yet alive I fasted and wept, for I thought, Who knoweth whether God may not be merciful to me, and the child may live? But now he is dead, and why should I fast? I cannot bring him back to life again. I shall die and go to him, but he will not return to me.” While there was hope, he begged and prayed for the child’s life; but now the time for prayer was over, and the time for bowing to the will of God was come.

Whether such thoughts stayed the mother’s heart and soothed her tears we are not told; but the king tried to comfort her. She had another little boy, and she called him Solomon, “the peaceful one,” for mothers chose the names in those days. And as his nurse carried him about the garden, clad in a little blue robe with white

tassels, the people said that he too was a beautiful child; and he grew up good and wise and handsome, and loved his mother. And God loved him, and old Nathan the prophet, in ragged brown cloak, loved the child too, and helped to teach the little prince the ways of goodness and wisdom, and gave him a second name, Jedidiah, "beloved of God." And years afterwards this yellow-haired child became the great King Solomon, whom men thought so wise.

And we shall not forget how the king wept and prayed for his little boy night and day, hoping he might live; for it is good that little children should remember how much their fathers and mothers love them, and that whether they be kings and queens or only poor people, it makes no difference.

XVIII

King David had a good many wives and a great many children, and when he grew old they quarreled about who should be first, and about many other things. When his son Absalom grew to be a man, he was the favorite of the people; for he was clever and ambitious, daring, bad, and good-looking. His mother was the daughter of a Syrian chieftain; and when Solomon was a little red-cheeked child, running with bare feet about

the king's gardens, Absalom was a grown man, wearing the robe and sword of a prince. He had a beautiful sister, who was deeply wronged by Amnon, the eldest of the king's sons, and Absalom hated him for it.

Absalom's farm was close to the country of the men of Ephraim, and in the spring-time of the year, when his sheep were being clipped of their wool, he gave a feast, and invited all the king's sons to the rejoicing. They came, riding upon mules, out along the road from Jerusalem, their bridles gay with tassels of red and blue, and their cloaks flying in the wind. And Absalom spread the rude feast for them, of roast mutton and red wine, in the open air. As the feast was going on, suddenly there arose a cry that Amnon was stabbed; for at a sign from Absalom his servant stepped forward and stabbed the king's eldest son.

The princes looked on their bleeding brother with horror in their faces, thinking it was a plot to slay them all, and that it was time to fly. Springing up from their seats, they ran to their mules, and rode off for their lives, clattering along the stony path in the moonlight on their twenty-mile gallop back to Jerusalem. Absalom also mounted his mule; but it was to ride away in the opposite direction about a week's journey, away to his mother's

country, where Talmai, his grandfather, chief of the men of Geshur, lived, and there he stayed for three years, afraid to return and meet his father, the king, after his horrid act of treachery.

But Joab, the general of the king's army, saw that his uncle, King David, loved Absalom deeply, and he spoke for him time after time, asking for a pardon; and at last the king consented to his son's return. Joab rode off to his cousin Absalom at Geshur with the joyful news; but the young man was not so well pleased when he was told that he was to live at his own home in Jerusalem and not at the king's castle, and on no account was he to try to see his father's face, for causing the death of a brother.

After two more years in Jerusalem, Absalom grew very tired of not seeing the king, and sent twice for his cousin Joab to come and speak with him; but the old general would not come to the young prince. It was hot sunshine, with the grass dry and crisp, for the harvest was near; and Joab's farm was next to Absalom's, with a fine field of yellow barley waving in the wind. And as Joab would not come when he sent for him, Absalom thought of a way to bring him. He told his servants to set fire to Joab's field of barley, and they did it. When Joab heard of the fire and of who had caused it, he came at once to Absalom's house,

and demanded what his slaves meant by setting fire to his field; and Absalom replied that he could not get him to come and speak with him otherwise, and he had ordered it to be done. And perhaps he laughed when he saw the look of amazement and wrath in his cousin's face. He told him also that he wanted him to speak again to his father the king, and let them be friends once more. And Joab liked the handsome prince so much that he went back to Jerusalem and spoke to the king, who sent for Absalom; and when the prince came in bowing very low, his father kissed him and restored him to favor.

But Absalom, although clever and good-looking, was a bad man, and was not at all grateful for the kindness of either his cousin or the king his father; and it would have been better if he had been kept outside Jerusalem, for he rebelled against his father, and caused the death of many people.

XIX

Absalom, the handsome prince, thought that King David, his father, had been king long enough; so he got a chariot of crimson and gold, with two fast horses, and fifty black slaves to run before him, and shout that he was coming. And when the people of Jerusalem saw him driving through the streets with his long, black hair, they thought

he was the most beautiful of princes. He also rose early in the morning, and sat in the shadow of the arch in the city wall where the city gate was, where he smiled and spoke kind words to all who went out and in, saying that if only he were made a judge he would do justice to every man; and the foolish people believed him. If any man bowed low before him, he put out his hand and took hold of him and kissed like a brother; and so he stole the hearts of the people of Jerusalem, who began to think what a fine king Absalom would make.

Years went past, during which he had been plotting with his young friends to make him king; and one day they went secretly to the town of Hebron on the hills, and there they blew trumpets, and shouted to their followers, —

“Absalom is king! Absalom is king!” And so many people were found to be on his side, that when the old king heard of it he was sore afraid, and fled hurriedly out of Jerusalem and across the Jordan to the strong fortress of Mahanaim, in the green hills of Gilead, and Joab, his faithful general, fled with him. When Absalom reached Jerusalem, his father was gone; so he had oil poured on his head as the new king, and lived in his father’s house amid feasting and wickedness, thinking that he had climbed into the throne very easily.

But Absalom was not satisfied with all this. In those savage days the new king did not think himself safe with the crown on his head and the ring on his hand until the old king was dead; so Absalom wished to kill his father — not because he hated him, but because he wished to remain king — a most shocking and wicked thing. So he gathered an army of thousands of tribesmen who were willing to fight against their old king, and made his cousin Amasa chief captain. Riding on the king's white mule and wearing the king's red robe, he led his tribesmen out of the city gate, and through the hill country, and down to the river Jordan, and up the other side again to the woods of Gilead, not far from the deep river Jabbok; and there they put up their hundreds of black tents, intending to attack the walled town of Mahanaim, and kill the old king, his father.

King David's spies brought him word that Absalom had crossed the Jordan; and he roused his fighting-men and divided them into three bands under Joab and Abishai, his nephews, and Ittai, a Philistine who had been captain of the wild men who used to follow him in his wandering days before he was king. King David wished to go out and fight; but his chiefs would not allow him, lest he should be killed. So he stood at the city gate as the men went out through the low arch in the

walls, and his parting words to his three captains were, —

“For my sake, deal gently with the young man Absalom.” The people heard, and resolved to take the king’s son alive; and Joab heard, but made no reply, for his love for Absalom was now gone.

In three bands Joab attacked Absalom’s men near the forest of Ephraim, where the ground was covered with thorns and masses of thick, prickly bushes through which not even a horse could force its way; and the fighting spread away through the woods, and from the cries of the fighters it was evident that Absalom’s men were flying before the attack of the king’s men.

Absalom, with a band of gold round his brow, and the long black curls which the people thought so beautiful, thinking to save himself and get back to the river Jordan, smote his mule and rode quickly through the woods with his head bent low — a dangerous thing to do. Coming to a dark oak tree, the mule dashed under the low branches, and suddenly the prince received a blow from a branch on the head that swept him off the mule’s back, and left him hanging by his long hair. King David’s men were following close behind, and one of them saw the prince hanging, and ran back to tell Joab.

“Saw him hanging! and why did you not smite him to the ground? I would have given thee ten silver pieces and a new belt?” exclaimed Joab fiercely.

“If I got a thousand silver pieces into my hand, I would not lift it against the prince; for I heard the king say, ‘Touch not the young man Absalom.’”

“I waste time talking with you,” was Joab’s fierce reply; and snatching up three short spears, he ran, followed by the young men, to the place where Absalom was still hanging from the tree, and stabbed him there as he hung. And the young men also stabbed the prince, until he died. Then Joab blew a long note upon his war-horn — the signal for the king’s men to cease fighting and return; for there was no need to fight any more, now that the prince was slain. Gathering round about Absalom as the red sunset glared through the woods, the tribesmen took him down and cast him into a hollow, and every man brought a stone and flung it upon him, as a sign of anger, until his body was hidden, and covered over with a large heap of stones, and then they left the place. And Absalom’s fighting-men, hearing of the prince’s death, fled across the Jordan, and did not stop until they had scattered every man home to his tent, for they had had enough of fighting against the old king.

And so Absalom died — a proud, bad prince, who caused the death of his brother, and would have killed his father; and yet, for all his badness, he was dearly beloved by the old king, who sat at the city gate anxiously waiting to hear if he had been taken alive, as he wished.

XX

King David's men blew their horns and shouted until the fight was stopped in the bushy woods of Gilead, for Absalom, the king's son, was slain. Men who loved him, and used to bow their heads as he drove past them in his crimson chariot, or smiled when he took them by the hand and kissed them at the gate of Jerusalem, carried their stone with the rest, and cast it upon the heap over his body in the hollow of the woods to mark where a prince lay. The skies were red, and the time for lighting the camp fires and for resting and taking food was at hand ; but there were young men eager to start away with the news of Absalom's death to David the king in the stronghold of Mahanaim, and Ahimaaz the spy was one of them. Coming to Joab, he asked leave to run off and tell the king the good news that God had slain his enemies, meaning Absalom.

But Joab knew who slew the prince, and understood the king's mind better ; and he told the young

man that he could carry the tidings some other day, for it was the king's son that was dead. He wished a stranger to carry the bad news, and turning to a black man of Cush, he bade him go and tell the king what he had seen; and the man sped off, glad to be a king's messenger.

When Ahimaaz saw the black man starting away with rapid steps, he begged Joab to let him go also, saying, —

“I pray you, let me run after the man of Cush.”

“Why wouldst thou run, my son?” replied Joab. “Thou wilt get no reward nor thanks for thy tidings.”

“Come what may,” was the reply, “I will run.” And he too sped away, his feet shod with supple sandals, and his tunic drawn up through his leather belt to leave his legs free. And the young men of the camp looked after him with admiration, for Ahimaaz was a good runner, and took a shorter road than the black man; and they wondered which would be first to reach the king, for they had some miles to run. And the two runners sped through the woods and up the valley into the hills towards the king's castle, in their efforts to be first to tell the news of the battle.

Now the old king sat patiently waiting at the gate of the walled town in the hills, from whence he could see the watchman on the top of the gate-

house tower, set up there to watch for a messenger; for the king thought it was about time he had news of the battle between Joab and his son Absalom.

“I see a man running alone!” the watchman called from the tower to the king and his friends sitting below.

“If he be alone he has tidings,” was the king’s remark. And there was silence, while the man watched the weary runner as he approached, struggling up the hill and up the stony road to the castle, getting ever nearer.

“I see another man running alone,” came again from the wall, as the second runner came into view.

“He also brings tidings,” the king remarked, and wondered whether it meant good news or bad.

“I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son,” called the man from the watch-tower, shading his eyes and gazing at the runner panting in the strong sunlight. It was evidently a race for who should get to the king first, and the news must be good.

“Ahimaaz is a good man, and comes with good news,” remarked the king, for he was pleased to hear of two runners racing each other. And the gate of the castle was ordered to be thrown open to receive whichever should be first, and the men gathered on the wall to watch the finish of the race.

Young people are often very impulsive, and this

young man Ahimaaz thought of nothing but the victory; but Joab, the older man, knew that the death of his son would grieve the king so deeply that he would care nothing for the victory. It is a terrible thing about battles, that, whoever wins, men are killed, and fathers and mothers and children weep and mourn at home, caring nothing for the victory.

XXI

Slowly Ahimaaz, the swift runner, had passed the black man, and now he was toiling up the stony path to the gate of the fortress of Mahanaim, and the aged king was there waiting with his friends to receive him. The people came running out through the low archway to get the first tidings of their sons and brothers and husbands who were with the army at the battle. In haste Ahimaaz was taken to the old king, his tunic pulled up high and bound tightly with his leather belt, his hair covered with the dust of the road, his face glistening with sweat, as, panting and breathless, he bowed to the ground, awaiting the command to speak.

“What is the news?”

“Peace! Blessed be God, who hath defeated the men that rose against the king!” he replied with panting breath.

“Is it well with the young man Absalom?” the king asked eagerly, his keen eyes fixed on the messenger’s face.

“When Joab sent me off I saw a great riot, but I knew not what it was,” the young man answered doubtfully, for he remembered Joab’s advice not to carry bad news. But by this time the black runner was near, and when the people brought him up, the king bade Ahimaaz stand on one side.

“Tidings for my lord the king!” the black man shouted with panting breath, eager to tell what he did not doubt King David would be glad to hear. “God hath slain this day all them that rose against thee,” and his voice was joyful.

“Is it well with the young man Absalom?” the king asked earnestly, for fear was entering his mind. The answer of the black runner was more truthful than that of the other, although he too saw from the king’s face that he must be careful what he said.

“May all the enemies of the king, and all that would hurt thee, be as that young man is!” he said. And David knew that his much-loved son was dead, and he was so deeply moved that he made no reply. Rising from his seat, he walked towards the room in the tower built on the wall over the stone gateway; and as he went

he wept and smote his hands together, calling loudly, —

“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” The people followed him in silence as he went to the doorway and up the steep steps to the little chamber in the tower where he lay down to weep and moan. Standing below, the people heard his groans, and went away to tell others, who came and listened and went away, until all the town knew of the king’s grief.

And instead of the usual shouting, dancing, feasting, and rejoicing over a victory, the day was one of sorrow; for the people whispered to each other, —

“The king mourneth for his son.” And when the fighting-men came back with pealing horns and fluttering of little red and green flags borne high on their spears, shouting and dancing as they came, a messenger from the town told them to be quiet because of the king’s sorrow; and instead of shouting as they went under the arch, they walked stealthily, like men that had been beaten in battle, for they too heard the voice of the king as he sat on the floor above, with his cloak over his head, wailing and lamenting, —

“O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

But one of the warriors turned aside when he heard the king's cries, and going up the stair with heavy steps, stood in the dark room leaning on his spear, and looking at the cloak-covered figure of the old king. It was Joab, the man who slew Absalom hanging in the tree, and he despised the king as he saw him sitting on the floor weeping like one of the mourning women.

"Thou hast made the face of all thy servants to be ashamed this day," were Joab's grim words; and King David knew the voice of his terrible captain. "They have saved thy life this day, and the lives of thy sons, and thy daughters, and thy wives. It is as if thou lovest them that hate thee, and hatest them that love thee. Thy chiefs and thy people are as nothing to thee. I see that if Absalom had lived this day, and we had all been slain, it would have pleased thee well." Joab was roused to fierce anger because the king had no word of thanks to the men who had risked their lives for him and for his family.

"Rise and go out, and speak pleasantly to the people," he commanded; "for I swear that if thou go not out now, there will not remain a man with thee this night, and it will be worse for thee than anything that hath happened to thee since thou wast a youth." These were Joab's grim words, and King David knew that his fierce captain had

but to step out on the wall and blow his horn, and he would have all the fighting-men round him to march out of the town at his bidding, and leave the king deserted. And so the old king cast off his cloak, and, rising from the floor, washed himself and went down to the gate of the tower; and his chiefs gathered round him, and the people came again when they heard that he was there. And he praised them for slaying Absalom's men, but not for slaying Absalom; which seems strange, for what better is a king's son than another? But in his heart he hated a Jb for making him do this, and because he killed his son; and he never forgave him.

And soon King David left the town, and returned with all his followers and wives and children back again to Jerusalem and his home on Mount Zion, which he never left again.

Kings are very like other people when you look into their hearts; and what King David cried in his grief for his son has been true of many fathers since—"Oh that I had died for thee, my son!"

XXII

When King David was young he was very strong. We are told that he could wrestle with a lion, break a bow of steel, and run as fast as a wild deer. But when he reached seventy years of age he was bent and feeble, although he was still King of

Israel, living in a palace on Mount Zion. He had many wives and many children, and they caused him much trouble with their plotting and quarreling. Michal, King Saul's daughter, was his first wife; but when he grew old, the beautiful Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, was his favorite. Solomon, the prince, was now almost a man, and the king loved him the best of all his children; but he had another favorite — the most beautiful girl that could be found in all the land, and she came from the little town of Shunem amid the sunny corn lands by the river Kishon.

The old king had fought in many battles, and had cruelly killed many people; but now he was in the hands of two gentle women — his favorite wife and this young girl — and he spent most of his days in his little room of the palace; and although he sometimes came out, the people saw him no more sitting at the gate of the city to hear their complaints and judge their cases. And some began to think that he had been king long enough; and perhaps he had, for it is a wise thing for an old and feeble man to let others take up his work while he is still alive to advise them what to do. When Absalom of the long hair tried to snatch the crown, Joab the fighter and Abiathar the priest were against him; but now these two men

agreed with those who thought that King David had been king long enough.

And when Adonijah, the king's eldest son, declared one day that he should now be king, these two men took his side. Following Absalom's example, Prince Adonijah prepared chariots and horses, with black men to run before him, and, surrounded with his friends, he went out of the city to the Kedron valley, and slew and burned sheep as sacrifices upon the large stone at the Spy's Spring. He also sent invitations to all the chiefs, and all the king's sons except Solomon, to come and join him there. And the chiefs came to the Spring of the Spy, and Adonijah feasted them there. But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, captain of the king's bodyguard, did not come.

Nathan, who had once been a student among Samuel's young men at Gibeah, was one of King David's oldest friends; and when he heard the news about Adonijah, he went to the palace and told Queen Bathsheba of the feast that was going on at the Spy's Spring, and bade her tell the aged king at once.

Dressing herself in the colors she knew the king loved, this beautiful woman went into his chamber, where the girl Abishag was tending him, and kneeling down she bowed her face to the floor until he bade her rise and say what she wanted.

"My lord," she said, "didst thou not swear to me that Solomon, my son, should be king after thee, and sit upon thy throne? And now Adonijah hath been made king, and thou, my lord, knew it not. And he hath killed bulls and sheep in plenty, and hath asked all thy sons, and Joab and Abiathar, to the feast, but thy son Solomon he hath not asked." This was startling news for the old king, who had not heard of his son's revolt, and he listened while she went on to say what he should do.

"And now, my lord, O king, all the people are looking to thee, that thou shouldst tell them who is to be king after thee. Or else it will happen when thou art dead that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders." She meant that they would be killed by Prince Adonijah.

Then Nathan, the king's old friend, came in, and as Bathsheba went out he too bowed his face to the floor and told the same story of the revolt of Prince Adonijah and of Joab, adding that the prince and his friends were even now feasting and drinking, and shouting, "God save King Adonijah!" down at the Spring of the Spy across the Kedron, and he asked if this was by the king's orders. The old king did not take long to settle what he would do.

"Bring back Bathsheba," he said. And Nathan

brought her back, and left them together. Then the king told her that he would keep his promise, and then she went on her knees to him, and bowed her face to the floor, murmuring, —

“Let my lord live for ever!”

“Send for Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the captain,” the king continued, for the old lion was roused in him; and it was done. When they arrived, he ordered them to take his son Prince Solomon at once and proclaim him king before all the people; and they bowed low, and went out.

Bathsheba took her ruddy-cheeked boy, for he was not yet twenty, and dressed his dark-brown hair, and put on him a king’s tunic of fine white, and over it a king’s robe of purple. Benaiah called out the king’s bodyguard of men, armed with shields and spears; and they put the lad upon the king’s white mule, with the gold bridle chains. Zadok the priest took out the horn of scented oil from the ark in the purple tent on Mount Zion, and with Nathan in his prophet’s cloak of dusty brown, they led the young prince from the palace down through the city streets to the well of Gihon, in the valley of Hinnom, not far from where Prince Adonijah and his friends sat feasting and drinking.

King David’s flag fluttered from a spear stuck into the ground at the pool of Gihon, where Prince

Solomon stood, surrounded by the shields of the king's bodyguard; for he was to be proclaimed King of Israel in place of his aged father.

And then Zadok the priest poured scented oil on the young prince's head, and the guards and people shouted, "God save King Solomon!" and with trumpets pealing, and pipes sounding, and drums throbbing, they brought him back towards the city, riding on the king's white mule, his dark hair wet with the scented oil. They rode through the city gate, and the old king heard the shouts of the people coming up the hill of Zion, and there they stopped and placed the young prince on the king's white throne, and bowed the knee to him, and shouted until they could shout no more. And so for a time there were two kings in Israel — an old and a young one.

And thus another of King David's sons tried to snatch the crown from his father, although he knew the commandment that he was to honor his father and mother; and surely there is no sweeter command of God, unless it be that fathers and mothers are to love their children.

XXIII

As Prince Adonijah and his friends were feasting at the Spring of the Spy in the vale of Kedron, they little knew what was taking place in the city above. It was the practiced ear of Joab the soldier that first caught the sound of the pealing trumpets and the shouting of people, as he sat eating and drinking with his companions; and he asked his servants what was the meaning of the uproar in the city, but no one could tell him.

The feasting and drinking went merrily on round the ruddy fires under the twinkling stars, for they thought that King David was too old to do anything. But suddenly a messenger burst in among them, shouting in a voice of alarm as he told them what had happened at the pool of Gihon, and what was the meaning of the noise coming over the city walls and down into the valley. Solomon had been proclaimed king. He would tell them also that the old king sat up in bed and blessed the young prince when he returned from his anointing. When Prince Adonijah's friends heard this, they sprang to their feet, and every one got away as fast as he could from the Spring of the Spy and their drinking-horns, some to hide in the city and some in the country; for they were terribly

afraid of what King David and Solomon would do to them.

Prince Adonijah fled to the tent of God on Mount Zion, where he thought he would be safe, and he would not leave it until King Solomon promised to spare his life.

“If he shows himself a worthy man,” the young man said, “not one hair of his head shall fall; but if wickedness be found in him, he shall surely die.” And Prince Adonijah came kneeling before his young brother the king, and bowed his face to the ground in supplication.

“Go to thine house,” was the reply; and the prince went, for the king had spared his life. But that was not the end of Prince Adonijah, for it came about in this way.

The young king Solomon, whom the people thought very good and beautiful and wise, put on the old king’s crown of gold with gems in it and the king’s robe of purple embroidered with red, and sat in the king’s white chair of ivory, holding the king’s gold-headed spear in his hand; and all the chiefs of Israel and of Judah, and of the countries which his father had conquered, came and bowed themselves before him with presents in their hands, and there was great feasting, drinking, and rejoicing in Jerusalem. It was then a time to ask favors, and the young king would

grant them freely, for he was receiving so much that it was pleasant and easy to give pardons to prisoners, and honors and presents to others, which cost him nothing. There are some young people who are quite willing to give away what they will never miss, and King Solomon was one.

Among those who came to ask a favor was his beautiful mother Bathsheba, and, like a true mother, she sought nothing for herself. Prince Adonijah had come to her to get her to ask his brother Solomon to give him the beautiful girl Abishag to be his wife, and Bathsheba agreed to speak to the king for him.

When she came into the hall with the vermillion roof, where the young king received his chiefs, they made way for her as she went towards the raised place where he sat in his purple robes, with chains of gold about his neck and broad gold rings on his arms and legs. When King Solomon saw her, he rose from his ivory chair and bowed, for she was greater than he; and going down to meet her, he kissed her, for she was his mother. Then he ordered another ivory chair to be brought and put alongside his, on his right hand, the place of honor, that all might see, and all the people might know, how a man should honor his mother. And in this he was wise and good, and an example to

the world. Then Bathsheba told him in a low voice that she had come to ask a favor.

"Ask on, my mother," the young king replied, "for I will not deny thee." But when she told him what it was, he grew very angry, declaring it was part of a plot to make Prince Adonijah king. And perhaps it was, for he gave immediate orders that Prince Adonijah and old Joab should be slain, and Abiathar the priest made a prisoner in his house; and that was the astonishing answer he gave to his mother's request after promising her so much.

King Solomon lived in barbaric times when men thought little of killing each other; but when he bowed to his mother, and placed a chair for her beside his own, he showed that there was greatness in him. We would have liked him better, however, if he had bowed less to his mother's face and more to her wishes, for it must have been little pleasure to her to be honored by a son who refused her request and ordered the death of his own brother.

Robert Bird.

The Story of Solomon

I

THE last thing holy King David did was to have his son, young Solomon, anointed to reign, and then to show him to the people, and charge them to help him build the temple for the Lord God. For he said Solomon was still very young, and the work was very great; so he begged the people of the tribes to bring their offerings; and so they did. They brought gold, silver, brass, iron, and beautiful stones, or the wood of oak and cedars, according to what they had or could give; and when David saw it he was very happy and glad, and offered it up to God, and prayed that God would give unto his son Solomon a perfect heart, that he might serve God and keep his laws.

Then there was a great feast all round Mount Sion, all the people eating, and drinking, and rejoicing, and praising God, who had given them rest from all their enemies.

When King David died, Solomon was still almost a boy. But God spake to him in a dream by night, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

Then Solomon said he was but young, and knew not how to rule over this great people that God had given him; and therefore he prayed, above all, that God would give him a wise and understanding heart. And God was pleased with Solomon's choice, and said that because he had cared for wisdom most, and had not asked for riches, or long life, or to put down his enemies, that therefore, besides wisdom, God would give him all the rest — riches, and honor, and length of life — and he should be wiser, and greater, and richer, than any king ever was before him, or should be after him. All this was because he had cared so much to have a wise and understanding heart to know good and evil. That was first with him, and so God gave him all the rest. So it will be with all who seek first of all to be good. God does not make us wise all at once like Solomon, but if we care about it, he will help us to get wise by little and little if we really try, and then he will bless all we do.

Here is a story to show how wise and clever King Solomon was. One day when he was sitting on his throne two women came to him: one with a live baby, the other with a dead one, both boys, and just of the same age. They said that they had been living together in the same house, each with her little baby till one night one of

the women rolled over her child in her sleep and stifled it, so that she found it was dead. But each woman said it was not her baby but the other's that was dead, and that the mother of the dead one had put the little corpse down by the other sleeping woman, and taken her living child out of her bosom to herself. How was it to be known which was right? — for nobody out of the house knew the two little ones apart, and each of the women declared that she was the mother of the live child, not of the dead. So they came to the king to judge between them.

And what plan could Solomon take to find out the truth? He sent for the executioner, with a sword, and said that as the women could not agree, the living child should be cut in two, and each woman should have half of it. One woman was content to have it so, but the other only cried out in grief and dread, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." Then Solomon saw in a moment which was full of mother's love, and which was full of hatred and jealousy; so he said, "Give *her* the living child, and in no wise slay it; she is the mother thereof." And so the true loving mother had her child safe and well, and the other was disappointed in her spite.

II

King Solomon was the greatest king in wisdom and riches who ever lived. He had an ivory throne with golden lions standing on the steps, and a beautiful house lined with sweet cedar-wood. He sent ships which brought home gold and silver, and apes and peacocks; and it was said that gold was as common as silver generally is, and silver as common as stones! All people honored him, and the queen of Sheba came from her far-off country to see him, because of the fame of his greatness. And when she saw him she was quite overcome, and said that all she had heard was not half so grand and glorious as what she saw. Very happy, she said, were the people who stood round him and heard the words of his wisdom.

We have the words of his wisdom in the book of Proverbs in the Bible, for his wisdom came from God. And though we shall never see his purple robes or his gold and silver, do you know what our blessed Saviour said? — “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

The least little flower, if you look well into it, is more beautiful than anything King Solomon ever wore, for God made it; and he could only put things together that were made already.

It is very sad to say that as Solomon grew old he left off being good. He married a great many wives, and brought them from the heathen nations round; and he did not teach them to worship the true God, but let them worship each in her own way. So, out in his gardens, one lady had her idol to the moon, and another had hers to the dreadful idol Milcom, and so on; and though Solomon knew so much better, even he was persuaded to come and pay honor to these idols just to please these women — he, the son of David, whom God had blessed so much.

And what the king did the people were sure to do. So God spake to Solomon, and told him that since he had fallen away from the right way, he must be punished, and that ten out of the twelve tribes would be taken away and not belong to his kingdom. It was not to happen in his own time but in his son's time; but it must have been very sad to him to know that his beautiful kingdom and great power were to be so lessened, and that his son Rehoboam was a very foolish young man, who would spoil everything. But he was not to lose all, only part, for the sake of the holy King

David, to whom God had promised that his throne should last forever.

There was a strong brave man of the tribe of Ephraim, named Jeroboam, and God sent his prophet to speak to him. Jeroboam had a new mantle on, and the prophet took it and tore it into twelve pieces, and gave Jeroboam ten of them. Then the prophet said this was to show how God was going to tear away ten tribes from Rehoboam, the grandson of David, and give them to Jeroboam, because Solomon was bringing idols in to be worshiped. And he told Jeroboam that all should go well with him, and he would be a great king, and his sons after him, if he would go on serving the Lord and the Lord only, and would keep from idols.

III

Solomon's son was named Rehoboam. He was foolish and hasty; and when his father's wise old men gave him good advice he would not listen to them, but only cared for his young friends, who were as foolish as himself. So when the Israelites came to him to ask him not to be hard upon them, and make them bring him so much corn and so many sheep, the old men told him to answer them kindly and gently, but the young men said he had better be fierce and sharp. So

he followed the young men's advice, and made a very unkind answer. This made them all so angry that they said they would not have him for their king any longer; but they took Jeroboam, a brave strong man of the tribe of Ephraim, and made him their king. Only two tribes still held steady to Rehoboam. These were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. God left him these, because of the promise that King David's sons should go on sitting on his throne. But ten of the tribes had made Jeroboam their king; so that now there were two kingdoms — a large one called Israel, and a small one called Judah. This was because Solomon had let his heart turn away from God, and had not taken pains to keep his people holy, but had cared more for riches, and power, and glory. But Jeroboam did not take pains to serve God. He set up two calves, made of gold, for the Israelites to worship, instead of going to the temple.

It is a sad story told in this reading. There was a man who was called a prophet, because God spoke to him, and used to send him to declare his will to the people.

Once God called this prophet, and told him to go to a place named Bethel, where the wicked king of Israel, Jeroboam, had set up a golden idol in the shape of a calf, and was teaching the

people to pray to it, instead of going to the temple at Jerusalem to worship. He was to tell the king of his sin, and how his idol should be overthrown and destroyed; and when he had done this, he was to come home at once, by a different way, and neither eat bread nor drink water, but come quickly back.

The prophet went to Bethel and he spoke God's word to the king boldly; and when the king put out his hand to strike him, God struck the hand, so that Jeroboam could not draw it back till the prophet prayed for him. Then Jeroboam felt God's power, and wanted the prophet to come to his palace with him. But the prophet said no; for God had commanded him to go home at once, without eating or drinking in that wicked place. So he set off.

He had so far done well; but before he had gone all the way he grew tired, and he sat down under an oak. It was a great pity that he delayed for there was a bad man coming after him with a lie upon his lips. This man told the prophet that God had said he was to come back and eat and drink; and I am grieved to say the prophet listened, and turned back. He ought to have known that God would have told him himself if he was to go back; but he did not think — he did what pleased himself, not what pleased

God; and he went back to feast with this stranger. But God's anger came upon him. When he went back in the evening, a lion came out of the wood and killed him. The lion did not kill the ass he rode upon, nor tear the body, and the ass did not run away from the lion; but the lion and ass both stood by the dead prophet till — who do you think found him? The very man who had tempted him to do wrong! Must not that have been a terrible sight?

It is very sad to say, but the Israelites went on getting more fond of idols, and would not worship God. They grew so wicked that at last he punished them, to teach them who sent the rain and did them good.

He would not let it rain for three whole years. No rain by day, no dew by night! The corn would not grow, the grass dried up, and all the streams were nothing but stones; so that there was nothing to eat or to drink, and everyone was in sad distress.

There was one good man, a prophet, called Elijah, and God took care of him. He sent him to a lonely place, by the side of a little mountain stream, where there still was water to drink; and every morning and evening there came two ravens who were sent by God, to bring him bread and flesh. That was a great

miracle, or wonder, which God worked to feed his prophet.

In time the brook dried up, and then God sent Elijah to a town called Zarephath. There Elijah saw a poor woman gathering sticks, and he asked her to give him a bit of something to eat. But the poor widow woman said she had nothing for herself and her son but a handful of meal and a little oil, and she was going to make a cake of it and bake it with a fire of her sticks; and that was the last she could get, so they must die of hunger after they had finished.

But Elijah still told her to make him a little cake first, for he said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

And the woman believed him and gave him a bit of her last cake. And it was as he said. There was always meal and oil enough to feed them day by day; the widow, and her son, and the prophet, went on living on the meal every day, for God fed them.

At last the child fell sick and died; and his mother grieved for him. But Elijah laid the child on his bed, and prayed to God to have mercy on the widow: and God had mercy. The little child's

soul came back, and he was alive again; and Elijah gave him to his mother.

Are not these three great wonders of God's goodness? God does not let us see miracles now, as he did in those times, because we are taught to believe in him without them. But he still takes care of us. He takes care that if we trust to him, and pray to him, we shall have our food every day. And if we are ready to give what we want ourselves away to one who needs it, he will make it up to us, and take care of us all the more. And though no one is brought to life now who has died, yet God often gives us back our friends when they have been very ill; and we know that we shall all rise up from the dead and live with God forever, at a greater call than Elijah's.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

The Widow's Oil

JEHORAM King of Israel, lived in a fine house on the watch-hill of Samaria, with men about him armed with spears and swords, and black slaves to serve him. He was the king; but Elisha, the prophet of the meadow of dancing, down by the Jordan's green banks, was a greater man, for he was a better one. The king had built a temple in Samaria as a house for Baal, the wooden image with the ram's head; but Elisha bade the people worship the living God, whose prophet he was, and they loved Elisha with his sheepskin cape and oak staff more than King Jehoram in his purple robes and crown of gold.

Elisha's home was in the dancing meadow, where he used to plough the fields for his father, and his mother's house was still there; but this daring man went about the country, from glen to glen and village to village, stirring up the people to give up worshiping Baal on the hill-tops, and to worship God. One of the hills that he often went to was the place of burning, on Mount Carmel by the sea, where Elijah the prophet had pulled down an altar to Baal, and put up an altar to God

in its place. Elisha also had many followers, young and old, whom he taught; and they called themselves the sons of the prophets, but we should now call them divinity students. And one day a woman came to him for advice and help, as many people did, and he saw, from her manner of dressing her hair, that she was a widow.

"Thy servant, my husband, is dead," she said — he had been one of Elisha's followers — "and thou knowest that he worshiped God. A man to whom he owed money hath come to my house to take away my two boys and sell them for slaves." This was a very cruel thing, but it was according to the law, which was unjust to the poor, as it sometimes is still.

"What shall I do for thee?" the prophet replied. "Tell me what is in thine house."

"Thy servant hath nothing in the house but a pot of oil," she answered.

"Go, then, and borrow empty jars and dishes from all thy neighbors; borrow not a few. And go into thy house and shut the door on thee and thy sons, and pour out into all these things, setting them aside as they are filled."

And the woman did so by the light of a lamp in her little dark house, her two sons helping, until they had not another dish to bring, and the oil ceased to run. Then she opened the door and let

in the sunshine, and hastened away to tell the prophet.

“Go and sell the oil,” he said, “and pay thy debt, and live, thou and thy sons, on the rest of the money.” And so the widow’s boys were not taken from her to be slaves, and the prophet in his brown cloak and staff went on his way up and down the country.

There are some things which little children have that do not grow less by giving away. Love is one of them, and the more love you give away, the more you have to give; and that is your little cruse of oil, which may fill many hearts and yet never be empty.

Robert Bird.

The Story of the Writing on the Wall and of Daniel in the Lion's Den.*

I

AFTER Nebuchadnezzar's death his son Belshazzar succeeded him and sat on the throne. Daniel still continued to dwell in Babylon, but he lived by himself in his own house and did not now take any part in the government. If he had done so, when Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and invited them to drink wine with him out of the golden vessels that had once been used in the temple of God in Jerusalem, Daniel would have uttered a protest. But the king had not Daniel by his side to warn him, and so he and his people went on in their foolish orgy, drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone. The merriment was at its height; the dancing girls had performed before the king and his nobles. There was shouting, there was singing, the light shone and the hour was full of revelry. But hush! What is this?

* From *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster, by permission of Moffat, Yard & Company.

Suddenly, on the wall, are seen the shadowy fingers of a man's hand. Nothing else can be seen except the fingers of the hand writing, and the king looks up and trembles with fear. Hurriedly he calls for his wise men, begs some one to read the writing and tell what it means. ~~X~~ Whoever can tell the meaning of the mystic words written by the shadowy hand on the palace wall shall be clothed in scarlet, have a chain of gold about his neck, and be made third ruler of the kingdom. But no one understood the writing. Not a man could help at this moment, and the king in despair sat staring at the mystic lines until the queen mother came to him and reminded him of a person whom he had forgotten.

~~X~~ There is a man, she said, in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods;

And in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods was found in him.

~~X~~ Belshazzar listened and at once sent messengers in all haste to find Daniel. It was not now a youth who came and stood before the king but a stately man of middle age, with keen and piercing eyes, a man who was himself a prince in dignity.

Belshazzar begged him to interpret the strange writing that the shadowy hand had left on the

palace wall and he promised him all the great gifts, the gold chain, the royal robe and the position of third ruler in the kingdom. But Daniel answered, ~~Let~~ Let thy gifts be to thyself and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing for the king and make known to him the interpretation.

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty and glory and honor.

And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, all nations and languages, trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of

heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in Whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

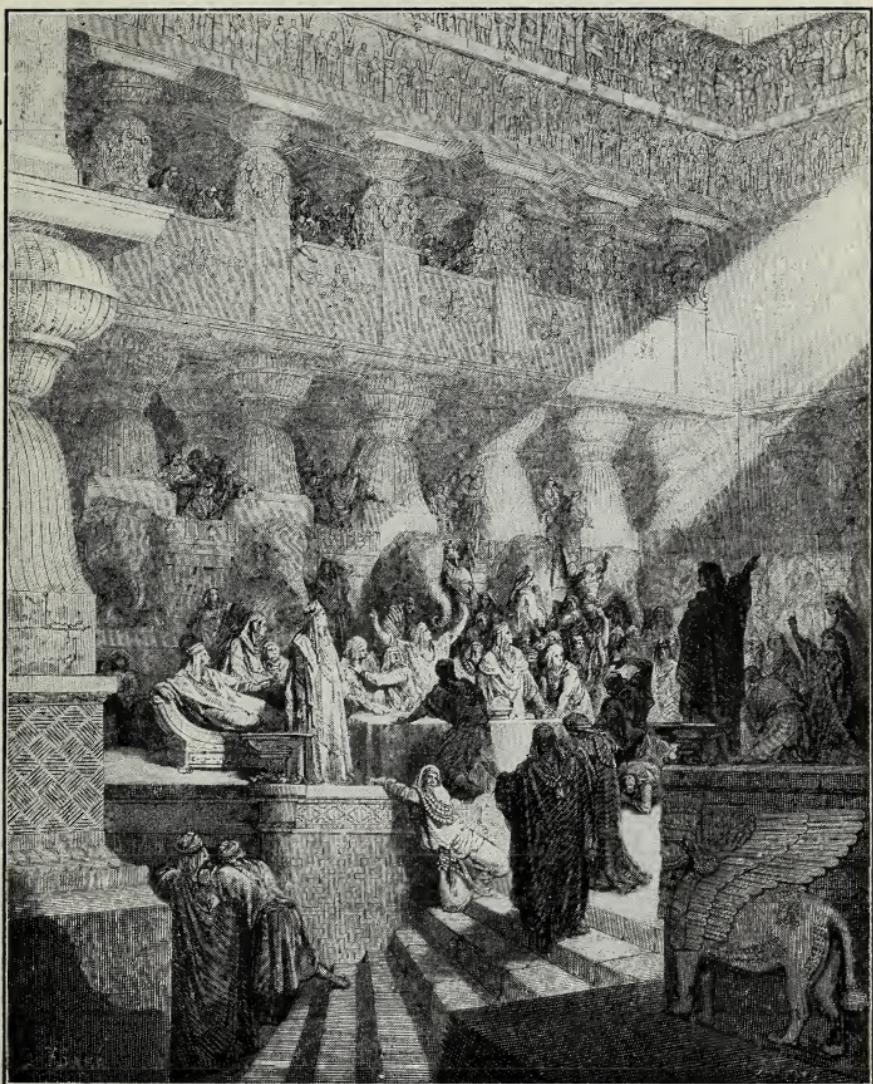
This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.

TEKEL; Thou are weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Darius and his army crept in by the water-gate while the city was madly rioting and the king feasting. The River Euphrates ran through Babylon. The Medes could not break down the city's walls, but they dug a canal and drew away the water of the Euphrates, and bribing some one to open the



Daniel Interpreting the Writing on the Wall

gate, they marched in on the bed of the stream. So the mystic writing was fulfilled.

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

And Darius, the Mede, took the kingdom.

II

The words written on the wall, Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians, came true on the very night of Belshazzar's feast. While he and his nobles were still feasting, the army of Darius was in the city, and the soldiers appeared between midnight and morning at the palace gates.

So soon as Darius, the Mede, had taken possession of the kingdom it pleased him to make Daniel his prime minister. In the government of the new king, Daniel took the same high place that he had formerly held when Nebuchadnezzar ruled the realm. Darius often asked Daniel to talk with him and took his good advice. But the other presidents and princes, rulers and governors, the people about the court who had come in with Darius and the other people who had been spared when Belshazzar was slain, were very jealous of Daniel. They watched him hoping to find something to say against him, to spy some fault, some mistake or some crime. But Daniel was so hon-

orable and faithful that not a single flaw could they find. At last they agreed together that unless they could somehow bring an occasion against Daniel on account of the way in which he served his God, they might as well drop the attempt. They went about the matter with a great deal of cunning and craft. It was the custom among the Persians and Medes to consider the king a fit object of worship. It was the custom, too, just as in the days of Ahasuerus, to regard a law once made by the king as forever fixed and not to be changed. If only these bad people could persuade the king to make a law which Daniel would be certain to break on account of his conscience, they felt sure that his ruin would be accomplished.

You may imagine how cunningly they hid their design from the king, who was Daniel's friend. Entering the royal presence they said, as they made their low salaams, King Darius live forever. They then went on to tell the king that all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counselors and the captains, had consulted together to make a royal statute and a decree that any one, whoever it might be, who should pray to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to the king, should be cast into a den of lions. Now, O king, they said, Establish

the decree and sign the writing, that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changes not.

 I suppose the king was flattered by this homage and did not stop to think what a great wrong he was committing. He signed the writing and the decree. Do you fancy for a moment that it would be possible to carry out such a foolish decree as this in any country, at any time? Prayer is asking for what one wants, and every little child who is hungry and goes to her mother and asks for bread, in that very asking, utters a prayer. Every day in the year all of us have to ask for many things we need both from men and from God. Daniel soon heard that this writing was signed,  but he did not alter his manner of life. On the contrary, he went into his house and, his windows being open in the chamber that looked toward Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before God, as he had always done.

 Darius had not been very long in Babylon. Daniel had been there for many years. All the people in Babylon knew that Daniel never forgot to pray in the Jerusalem chamber. It was not that he did it to make a show. It was simply that from childhood onward he had always, in that place, at certain times, knelt down and

prayed. He would not change his habit because of the command of any earthly king.

A Under Daniel's window and on the terrace outside his house, assembled little crowds of men, smiling with malicious triumph as they heard him praying and giving thanks to his God. It was the same God who had saved the three young men in the fiery furnace, and you remember, do you not, that, walking in the fire with them, those who looked on saw another whose form was like the Son of God? Daniel, equally with the three friends who had been saved from the furnace, trusted Jehovah and felt no fear.

The wicked men came to the king, bowing and smirking and trying to conceal their triumph. Hast thou not signed a decree, they said, that every man who shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, except of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?

A Yes, said the king, the thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changeth not.

Well, they answered, Daniel, who is of the captivity of Judah, obeyeth not thee, O king, nor regardeth the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

When Darius heard this his heart was heavy. **A** He was displeased with himself, and nothing is

harder than to feel in one's own heart that one has made a great and terrible mistake. He set his heart to deliver Daniel from the lions, and he labored to this end till the going down of the sun, but to no purpose. For whatever he said was met by Daniel's enemies with one word. The law of the Medes and Persians, once made, cannot be changed. There stood the law like a wall of rock. Even the king could not batter it down or find a way around it. So a guard was sent to Daniel's house and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The lions were fierce and famished. Nothing could be expected but that they would devour Daniel in the twinkling of an eye. Yet the king said: O Daniel, thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.

The man who that day was thrown to the lions was much more a king than the trembling man who wore the crown of Persia. They were probably about the same age; both had passed their youth, had lived long and seen many strange things. One to-day was flung into a den of ravenous beasts and the mouth of the den was closed with a stone which the other sealed with his own royal seal.

Long and bitter and cold was that night. The king in the palace spent it fasting and mourning, and he never closed his eyes. Very early in the morning, he could bear the suspense and agony

no longer and he ran in haste to the den and, standing by it, cried with a sorrowful voice unto Daniel, saying: O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?

Then said Daniel to the king, not in a sorrowful voice, but in the voice of one who has slept peacefully and been refreshed: O king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me; since before Him innocence was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

At this the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel should be taken up out of the den. No manner of bruise or wound was found upon him because he had believed in His God.

As for the men who had plotted against Daniel, they were thrown to the lions themselves, and the fierce lions had the mastery of them and quickly ate them up. Their bones were broken before they so much as touched the bottom of the den. Poor men! They little thought, when they conspired against God's servant, that they should so soon meet the dreadful death they meant for him.

 As for Darius, he made a decree and sent it out to the farthest bounds of his empire, to the effect that everywhere men should worship the God of Daniel. For, said Darius, He is the living God,

and steadfast forever, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed; and His dominion shall be without end.

Daniel lived long after this and had many visions of heaven. As he knelt in his room, praying with his face to Jerusalem, heaven often opened before him. He saw JEHOVAH sitting on a sapphire throne, he heard the songs of saints and angels, and, once, a voice which seemed to come from the sky said to him: O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee and stand upright, for unto thee am I sent.

So had God spoken to Moses, to Samuel, to David, to Elijah, and, in earlier days, to Abraham,  Isaac and Jacob. So, dear children, if we do His will and listen to His voice, He may sometimes, in the hush of our hearts, speak to us. We never need fear any trouble or trial if we are serving God and not thinking about ourselves. No lions shall hurt us, for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

Margaret E. Sangster.

NEW TESTAMENT



The Coming of the Christ-Child.*

WE have reached the most beautiful story of all. The world had been dark and sad. There had been little light to cheer it and little gladness anywhere for a long time when our Lord was born in Bethlehem. Babylon and Nineveh had passed away, Greece had conquered the world, and Alexander the Great had wept that there were no more worlds to conquer. In turn, the power of Greece had waned and Rome became triumphant over land and sea. When Jesus Christ was born Judea was a province of Rome. The priests still ministered in the Temple, but there was no sovereign in Judea except Herod, who was a prince paying tribute to the Roman Emperor. Herod was a cruel and wicked man, and the men and women of his house were all, without one exception, as bad as bad could be.

Jerusalem was full of people. Romans were there serving under the conquering eagle. Greeks, who were the scholars of the time, were there; traders, tourists and adventurers from every part

* From *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster, by permission of Moffat, Yard & Company.

of the globe that was then known found Jerusalem a place to which they loved to resort.

It occurred to Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, that this was the time of times when he ought to tax all the inhabitants of his realm; so he sent word to Judea that the different families must return to their native villages so that they might there have their names registered and from those places pay taxes. Obeying this order, a man named Joseph set out with his young wife, Mary, to go to the little town of Bethlehem in Judea, that there they might live for a while in the old home of their tribe.

Both Joseph and Mary belonged to the tribe of Judah and were directly descended from David the king. Soon after they arrived in Bethlehem the little Child of Mary was born. Though prophets, many centuries before He came, had foretold His birth, He was not born in a palace. Never on earth was a little child born in a lowlier home. Indeed, Jesus was not born in a home at all, for there was no room in the inn at Bethlehem for Mary his mother to lay her head, and she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born in a stable and laid in a manger. No little child of

earth was ever poorer than this. But wonderful things happened on the night when Jesus was born. There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks. The night was very still. Suddenly the shepherds saw a great light above them as if the heavens were opened and, looking up, there were crowds of bright angels leaning down from the sky. One mighty angel said to the shepherds, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Suddenly, the multitude of the heavenly host behind this herald angel began to sing in tones sweeter than earth had ever heard: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth Peace, Good-will toward men.

After the angels had gone away and the doors of heaven had closed, the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. They went with haste, running as fast as they could across the dewy fields in the early morning, and they found Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in a manger. No wonder they told every one they

met about the song they had heard and the glory of the angels in the sky.

A little time before this, we are told, three wise men, kings in their own country, which was very far away, had seen a strange star in the eastern sky. They had watched the star and had determined to go wherever it led them. So, with a train of their people, they had mounted their camels and had fared many miles across the desert, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.

Throughout the long journey the star led them till it stood in the sky over the place where the young Child was. When they saw the star standing there they knew they had found the right spot and, soon after the shepherds, they came into the stable where Mary held her little Child. They bowed low, with their faces to the earth, and worshiped Him and, from the treasures they had brought, they presented to Him precious gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The coming of these wise men was so remarkable that tidings of it were soon carried to Herod, the wicked king. He was very much troubled and annoyed because of that saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? He pretended to the wise men that he wanted to know all about



The Wise Men Guided by the Star

the king, when they found him, so that he, too, might go and worship him, but God warned them in a dream, and they went back to their own country by another way. Then Herod, in order that he might kill this little Child, whoever He might be, did the most infamous thing his cruel heart could think of. He sent forth soldiers and slew all the little children in Bethlehem from two years old and under, thinking that, in murdering these innocent infants, he would surely kill the little Child the wise men had come so far to seek.

Many dear little children were slain and many mothers mourned and wept. But Mary and her Child had been taken safe to Egypt. An angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Arise, take the young Child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.

He was there until the death of Herod. Before this flight into Egypt, Jesus had been taken to the Temple, as was the custom of all devout Hebrew parents, and there He had been circumcised and a sacrifice offered according to the law. Rich people sacrificed a lamb. Poor people offered a pair of turtle doves. For Jesus, the doves were the offering.

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Two old people, Simeon an aged prophet and Anna a prophetess of a great age, gave thanks to God when they looked on this little Child.

In due time Joseph and Mary returned to their own city Nazareth, where the childhood of Jesus was spent. There He grew strong and beautiful, and the grace of God was with Him. Every year at the feast of the Passover His parents went to Jerusalem. When Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him with them. Jewish boys were supposed to be old enough at twelve to worship with the men who fulfilled the rites of religion. They stayed in Jerusalem till the feast was over, and, when they left to go home again, as there was a large company of kindred and friends, they did not at first notice that Jesus was not with them. He had stayed behind in Jerusalem. They went a whole day's journey before they missed Him, then they turned back to see what had become of their Boy. It was after three days when they came upon this Child of twelve in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the learned doctors, listening to them and asking them questions. These grave rabbis were astonished at His understanding and answers.

His mother said to Jesus, tenderly, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, we have sought thee, sorrowing. And He said unto her,

How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?

Mary did not understand what He meant. I think He did not wholly understand it Himself; but He went down with His mother and Joseph to Nazareth and was subject to them, a sweet, loving, obedient son.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

He lived in Nazareth through the years between twelve and thirty, working with Joseph in the carpenter's shop, going to the synagogue on the seventh day of the week, and learning by heart much that was written in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. We can see what great honor Jesus put upon work, the hard work of men's hands, when He Who was the Child of God handled the tools of the carpenter, made yokes for the oxen and chairs and tables and everything that a carpenter made. We may be sure that He never did poor work, that everything Jesus touched was finished all through just in the best way He could do it. During those quiet years He was getting ready, little by little, for a life more full of toil in other ways than ever man lived on this earth.

When Jesus was thirty years old He came away from Nazareth where he had been so long hidden.

At this time John the Baptist had appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judea; John was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth who were cousins of Mary the mother of Jesus. John had lived much alone and had thought a great deal about duty to God and man. His office was to be a forerunner of Christ. When a great king goes anywhere on a visit, somebody sets out a few days in advance to make all things ready for him. A man who does this is called a herald or an ambassador. John the Baptist in the New Testament is a good deal like Elijah in the old. He was dressed in a rough cloak of camel's hair fastened with a leather girdle, and he did not care very much about luxuries and dainties. His food was what the desert gave him, locusts and wild honey. He came out of the wilderness crying with a mighty voice, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

You remember, when Jonah went to Nineveh so much against his will, he cried out, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

John had a different message. He cried, Leave your sins, be sorry for them, and begin a new life, because the kingdom of heaven is coming here to you. I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to

bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Crowds of people out of the cities, out of Jerusalem, out of the villages and from the fishing banks, came to John, heard him preach, confessed their sins and were baptized. He was not afraid of anybody. He looked the proudest people in the face and told them that they were sinners and must flee from the wrath to come.

One day when John was baptizing there came to him a man with a face of heavenly majesty and strange sweetness. He stepped forth from the crowd to the water's edge and asked John to baptize Him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee; and comest Thou to me?

John knew as he looked at Him that He was the Holy One of God. Jesus answered and said to him, Let it be so. It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. And so Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. As he came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him, softly, like a dove. And, lo, a voice from heaven came, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

A very little while after this baptism Jesus went alone into the wilderness, fasted there forty days and forty nights, praying to God. At the

end of the forty days He began to feel faint and hungry. Then came the tempter to Him saying, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The tempter next took Him into the Holy City and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, saying to Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

But Jesus answered, Get thee hence, Satan. For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

After this, the tempter left Him, and angels from heaven came and ministered to Him.

Children cannot understand much about this trying hour of Jesus. As people grow older they

know better what it means, but there is one thing the youngest child can understand. If evil thoughts come into your heart and you are tempted to do wrong, to be selfish, to be proud, to trample upon other people or to do anything mean, answer the evil thought with some word from God's book. Jesus every time answered the tempter with a word that was in the Scriptures, some word that He had learned by heart when He was a little child or a youth working at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth.

From this time Jesus began to teach and to preach. Walking by the Sea of Galilee He saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, fishing in the sea; their little boat and their nets were there, for they were fishermen, and He stopped and spoke to them. Follow Me, He said, and I will make you fishers of men.

At once they left their nets and followed Him. He went a little farther on and He saw two other men, brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they too were in a little boat with their father mending their nets. And they left the boat and their father and followed Jesus.

The next day He found Philip of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, and said to him, Follow thou Me. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, Come and see one of Whom Moses in the Law

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and Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said, doubtingly, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

Philip said to him, Come and see.

When Jesus saw him coming He said, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.

Nathanael said to Him, Whence knowest thou me?

Jesus said, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Instantly Nathanael answered, Master, thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel. And Jesus said, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, dost thou believe? Thou shalt see greater things than these.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

So the kingdom began. Jesus went about all Galilee, sometimes teaching in the synagogues, which were the churches of those days, sometimes preaching in the fields or from a little boat, often making sick people well and bad people good, everywhere doing kind things and making the world happy. In His first sermon He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

If you will read the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew you will see what a wonderful sermon Jesus preached as He sat on the mountain top which was His pulpit.

Margaret E. Sangster.

The Baptism of Jesus and the Calling of the Disciples

I

THE blessed Lord Jesus lived at Nazareth, and worked there as a carpenter until he was thirty years old, so that he has felt how we live here, and knows what our feelings and ways are by trying them.

When it was nearly time for him to begin to set up his kingdom, a holy man was sent to make ready for him. This man's name was John, and he lived out in the rocky and bushy country on the bank of the river Jordan, dressed in a coarse garment woven of camel's hair, and living on the locusts and wild honey he found there. He stood there telling everyone who came that the kingdom of God was going to begin, and that those who wished to belong to it must repent and give up their sins. All who would feel and own their sins he took down to the river and bathed and washed them, to show how some day they would have their souls washed, just as their bodies were washed now. This washing was called baptizing, and he is always called John the Baptist; but he

always told the people that there was One coming who was greater than he was, and that this holy one would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

One day, as John was baptizing, Jesus came to him, and desired to be baptized. His mother and John's mother were cousins, and John knew he had never done one wrong thing in all his life, and had nothing to repent of. So he said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Then Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

Then John baptized him; and as they were coming up out of the water, the heaven above was opened, and there came God the Holy Ghost, taking a shape like a dove, and rested upon the head of Jesus, and there was God the Father's voice speaking out of heaven, and saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Then John the Baptist knew that Jesus was the Son of God, and the great King whose way he had been sent to prepare.

We are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and made to belong to Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus had come into the world to

conquer the devil, to whom Eve had given power over it when she ate the fruit.

So he went up into a lonely place in the wilderness, that he might meet the devil, and stand up against all the temptations that had led Eve astray. He was there forty days, with nothing to eat; and the devil came and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But he would not do it at Satan's word; and so as Eve fell by eating, he stood by resisting hunger. Then the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them in one moment of time, and said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But though Eve had been tempted by seeing the beauty of the fruit, our Lord was not led astray by all the glory and beauty of this world. So he conquered again. Then he stood with Satan on the top of a high wall, with a precipice below; and Satan tempted him to cast himself down, so that the angels should come round and bear him up, and all might see he was the Son of God. It was just as Satan had told Eve, that she would be like a god if she ate the fruit; and he said, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Satan left him then for a time, and the angels came and waited on him. That was the begin-

ning of his victory over Satan and sin. And every one of us must fight our battle too. Whenever we are inclined to be naughty, Satan is tempting us, but we must try to be strong and drive him away; and our Lord Jesus will help us if we only try, and will drive him away.

II

Now that John the Baptist knew that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God, whom he had been sent to proclaim, he began to point him out, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There were two poor fishermen, who had come out to listen to John, who heard, and who went to Jesus and asked, "Master, where dwellest thou?" He said, "Come and see." Their names were Andrew and another John. They stayed all one night with him, and saw and felt that he was so great and holy that no one else could be the Christ who had been promised to come and save the world; and John was always the nearest and best loved of all to him.

Andrew went and told his own brother Simon, whom our Lord named Peter, which means a rock; and they brought two more of their friends to see him, whose names were Philip and Nathanael. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said,

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Nathanael asked how he could know him. Our Lord answered, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” Then Nathanael said, “Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” For he had been alone under the fig tree, and nobody who was not God could have seen or known he was there; and our Lord said that because he believed, he should see greater things than these.

Persons who loved to learn of a master were called his disciples. So John and his brother James, Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and his friend Nathanael, were all called our Lord’s disciples. They were all invited to a wedding at Cana, the village in the hills where Nathanael lived; and Mary, our Lord’s mother, was there too. But the bride and bridegroom were poor people, and in the midst of the feast it turned out that there was not wine enough. Then Mary said, in a low voice, to her son, “They have no wine.”

Now there were six great jars standing by, and Jesus told the servants to fill them with water. So they filled them up to the brim; and then he told the servants to draw out some of what they had poured in, and carry it to the chief person there.



The Prodigal Son in the Arms of his Father

As soon as this man had tasted it, he found it was such good wine that he said to the bridegroom that most people began their feasts with their best wine, but that here the best had been kept for the last. This was the first wonderful thing our Lord did on earth, and it made his disciples know that he was God, for no one else could have done such a wonder. We call these wonders miracles. Our Lord worked many more while he was on earth, and most of them were cures to the blind, or the lame, or the sick. He made them well directly by his power and love.

I told you Andrew and Peter and John were fishermen. They used to go fishing at night in boats, on the blue lake of Galilee, shut in between the high mountains. One night, they had been out in two boats, trying hard to catch fish, but none would come to their nets. In the morning, they saw Jesus standing on the bank, with a great crowd of people round him, come to see and hear his teaching. He called to Simon Peter to come and take him into his boat, so that he could teach the people from thence without being crowded. When he had done speaking, he told Andrew and Peter to go out into the deeper water, and let down their nets. They said, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down

the net." And instantly the net was so full of fishes, that Andrew and Peter could not draw it up without the help of John and his brother James who was with him in his boat; and both boats were quite full of fish, and ready to sink with the weight! When the boats came to land, our Lord told the four disciples that they were to come with him, for he would make them fishers of men, for they were to draw disciples to him, instead of catching fish. They believed him, and left all they had to follow him, and they were always with him — his dear friends who followed him everywhere, and stored up his holy words in their hearts.

III

Simon Peter had a house at Capernaum, which is one of the towns that stand upon the shore of the Lake of Galilee. There our Lord cured the mother of Peter's wife of a bad fever by his mighty power in one moment, and there he generally lived when he was in those parts; but he never stayed long there, for he went about doing good. In every town or village that he came to, he used to go and teach in the synagogue. A synagogue was a place where the Jews who lived too far from Jerusalem to go to the temple every Sabbath day used to meet, and hear the Old

Testament read and explained to them, and pray together. Our Lord used to teach in the Synagogues, and draw out all the meaning of the law; and when he came out, all the sick people who were near, and all the blind and deaf and dumb people, were brought to him, and he cured them all by only just touching them, or even only by bidding their disease to go away. For he was God as well as man, and could do all things. Or he would sit on the mountain side, and all the people would come round him, and he would teach them. There is one beautiful discourse of his, called the Sermon on the Mount, which I hope you will soon know well. And in it he taught his disciples the prayer you all say and call the Lord's Prayer, and which we love the best of all prayers.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

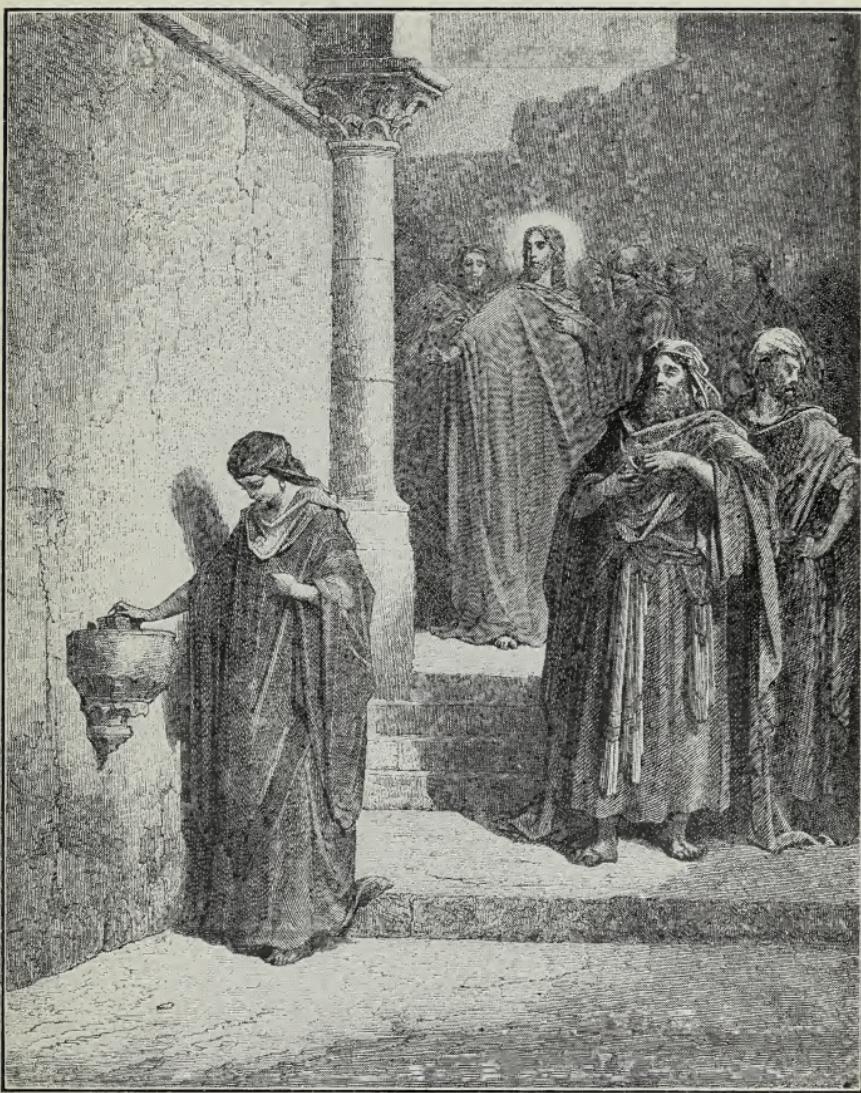
The Story of Jesus and His Twelve Apostles

I

OUR Lord Jesus chose out twelve of his disciples to be always with him, and to teach and work with him. All the six you have heard of before were among them, and there was another called Matthew, who had been a rich man, but left all his riches to follow our Lord. These twelve were called apostles.

I told you that the Jews were in two parties, called Pharisees and Sadducees, and they used to quarrel and have many bad ways. When they found that Jesus blamed them, they were very angry; and when he was called the holy one whom God promised, they said that the Christ would be a great king, and that he was only pretending. But all the poor heard him gladly; and when he was driven out of the towns, they came after him into the hill and open places, and went everywhere they could to hear him.

One day, evening was coming on, and all these people had been with him all day, and had nothing to eat. He said to Philip, "Whence shall we



The Widow's Mite

buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip came from a village just below, but he did not know what to do. Andrew said there was a little boy there, who had brought five loaves and two small fishes; but what would they be among so many? Indeed, the loaves were not like ours — only thin barley cakes. But our Lord said, "Make the men sit down." So they all sat on the grass; and he gave thanks, and began to give out to the apostles the bread and the fish, and they never came to an end, but there was enough for all the five thousand; and when they had all done, he told the apostles to gather up the remains, that nothing might be lost. And there was enough to fill twelve great baskets.

The people whom Jesus had fed wanted to make him a king, but he would not be an earthly king; so he told the apostles to row away across the lake, while he went up alone into the hills to pray to his Father, where the people could not find him.

It was a rough night. The wind came down from the hills, and tossed the lake up in great waves; and the apostles rowed with all their might, but they made little way. But when the night was far on, they saw a figure coming to them, walking on the waves. They were frightened, and cried out. Then the figure said, "It is

I; be not afraid!" and they knew it was their master, and were glad. And Peter said, "Lord if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." So he came out of the boat, and as long as he trusted in his Master, he could walk; but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and cried out, and then he began to sink. He called out, and Jesus put forth his hand and held him up, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Then they were both taken into the boat, and the wind ceased, and the lake was calm and still.

II

No one can think how good and kind our blessed Lord Jesus was. Once, when he was going with his disciples into a village called Nain, he met a funeral coming out. People are not carried to the grave in their coffins in the East; but they are laid on a sort of bed called a bier, with all their best clothes on, and a wreath of flowers round the head. The person who was now to be buried was quite a young man, and he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And when the Lord saw it, he had pity on the poor woman, and he said to her, "Weep not." Then he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. Then he said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And he

that was dead sat up and began to speak; and our Lord gave him back alive to his mother.

Only once all the time he was in this world did our Lord Jesus let his apostles see any of his glory, and then it was only the three who believed in him best, and whom he kept the most with him.

One night, he took Peter and James and John out to a mountain with him, as he was wont to do when he was going apart to pray. They went to sleep; but when they woke, they saw him in bright light and glory. His face was shining like the sun, and his clothes were as white as the light; and there were two talking with him, Moses and Elias. And they were talking of how he was come to die at Jerusalem. The three were afraid, but they were happy too; and Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias;" for, indeed, he hardly knew what he was saying.

And even as he spoke, a bright cloud came and hid the wonderful sight from them, and then they found that no one was with them but their master Jesus, looking as usual; and he bade them tell no one about what they had seen, until the Son of man should be risen again from the dead.

They knew that their Lord was the Son of man;

but they could not think what he could mean by rising again from the dead.

This wonderful showing forth of his glory is called the Transfiguration.

After his transfiguration, our Lord Jesus often told his apostles that he was going to be taken by the chief priests at Jerusalem, and that he should be ill-used and beaten, and spit upon, and put to death on a cross; and that the third day he should rise again. But they never could understand how this would be, for they had never heard of rising from the dead; and they were so sure that he was Christ, and that Christ would be a great king, that they never understood or believed that he was to die. And sometimes they even disputed among themselves who would be first and greatest in his kingdom. When they did this, our Lord called a little child, and took him, and set him in the midst, and said that the greatest in his kingdom would be the most like that little child; for only those who are ready to be last here can be high up there.

The Lord loved little children. Once, when the mothers were bringing their babies for him to touch, the disciples wanted to keep them away; but he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

And then he took the little ones up in his arms,

and put his hands on them, and blessed them. And just so he blesses the little children now, though we cannot see him and he is always glad to hear them pray.

III

For three years our blessed Lord went about doing good and teaching, generally in Galilee, in the towns or on the hills, where the people came out to hear him; and at the feasts, when people ought to worship at Jerusalem, he used to go up and speak to them in the outer court of the temple.

But there was a wicked high priest named Caiaphas, who had been set up by the Romans, and he and the Pharisees and Sadducees all hated Jesus, because he found fault with their evil ways, and they would not believe he was the Christ, but wanted to put him to death. So whenever he came to Jerusalem it was more dangerous; and then they stirred up the chief men of Galilee, so that he could not be in the town, but had to wander on the hills. Once, when a man wanted to follow him, he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

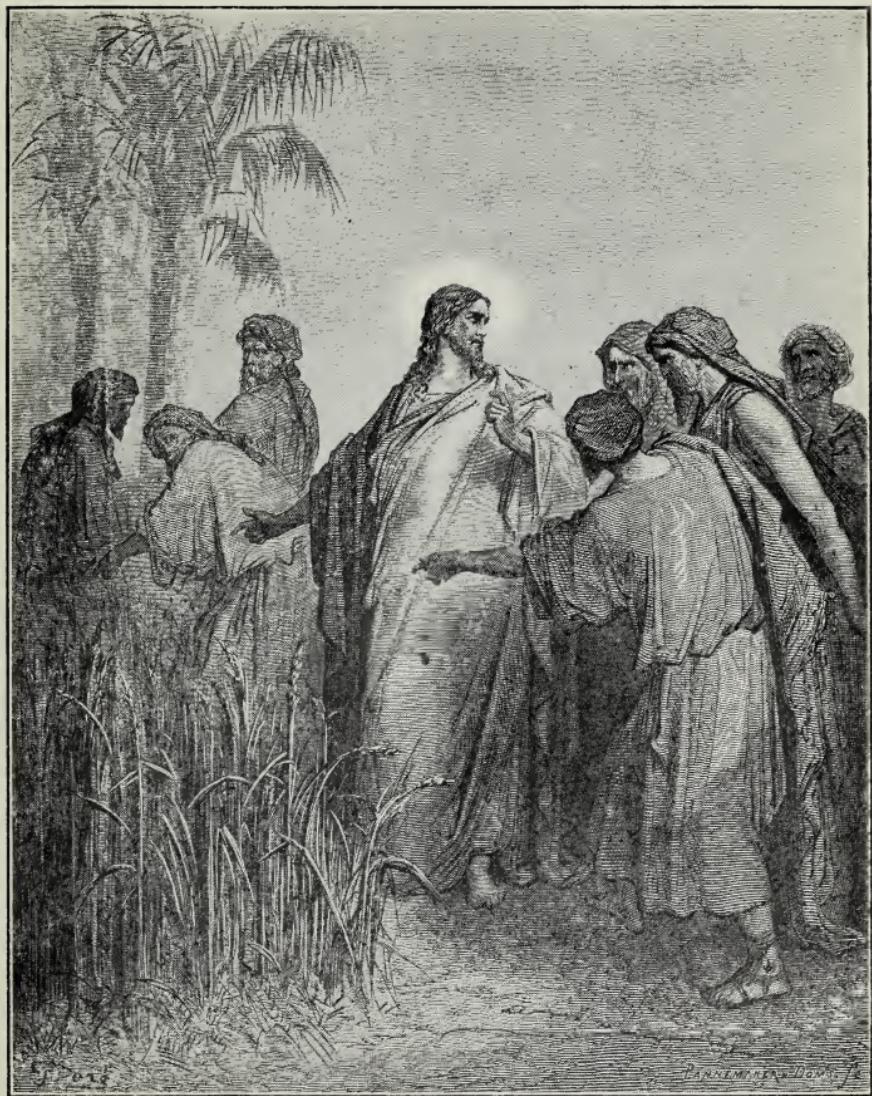
And at last, when his time was come, he set his face to go to Jerusalem to keep the Passover,

though he knew that he would be taken and put to death there, and so be the real Passover. As he was going, two blind men, who sat by the roadside begging, called out, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David!" And he stood still and cured them both.

It was only the great, rich, wicked men that hated our Lord. The common people heard him gladly, and only wanted him to begin to be king. And they really thought the time was come when he came up to Jerusalem. Just before he came in, he sent two of his disciples to fetch a young ass on which no one had ever sat, and on it he rode down Mount Olivet.

Now there was an old prophecy which said to Jerusalem, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass." People remembered this, and began to receive him like a king; they spread their mantles on the ground before him, and others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way; and the people before and behind, especially the children, cried out with all their might, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Hosanna means, "save now."

The Pharisees were very angry, and bade him stop them; but he answered with a verse of a



Jesus and His Disciples in the Cornfield

Psalm, "Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength?"

But as he looked at beautiful Jerusalem, he wept over the city, for he knew that sad and dreadful punishments were coming on it; and yet the people would not listen to him, and be sorry, and so be saved.

The first thing our blessed Lord did at Jerusalem was to go into the temple; and there, in the courts, he found people keeping shop, selling the lambs that were wanted for the Passover, and doves for other services, and changing the coin that strangers brought for Jewish money.

This was very disrespectful to God, and he was angry. He had driven them all out once, and they had come back, and now they were doing it again. So he drove them all out, and told them his Father's house was a house of prayer; but they had made it a den of thieves.

No one dared to answer him, and all that day and the next he stood in the temple, teaching the people, and showing the wickedness of the chief priests and Pharisees. It seemed as if all the people of Jerusalem were ready to follow him, and as if he might begin his reign directly; but this was not what he came for, and, as he well knew, the Pharisees were planning against him. They

wanted to get him to say something that they could say was against the law, so they asked him many hard questions, but his great wisdom put them all to silence, and made them ashamed; but they were so hard and wicked that they only hated him the more.

IV

The chief priests grew more fierce and bitter when they saw how all men listened to the Lord Jesus. They could do nothing to him by day, because the people would have risen up to defend him; so they tried how to find him alone and at night to take him secretly. Now, one of the twelve apostles named Judas Iscariot was too fond of money, and used to take for himself what was trusted to him to take care of. So he went on from bad to worse, till at last he did the dreadful thing of promising the chief priests that he would show them to some lonely place, where they could take his Lord and Master prisoner; and then they were to pay him for this wickedness with thirty pieces of silver. Judas settled all this, and then he went back to our Lord and the other eleven apostles just as usual, thinking they did not know; but our Lord did know very well. But he bade the apostles get ready the supper that was eaten the night before the Passover, in a large upper

room that was lent to them for it, and there he sat down to eat with them.

When our Lord and his apostles were eating the supper together, he was very sorrowful, and said, "One of you shall betray me." The apostles were grieved, and each said, "Lord is it I?" And he said, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." And then, as the custom was, he dipped his piece of bread in the dish in the middle of the table, and gave it to Judas. Then the wicked man presently got up and went away.

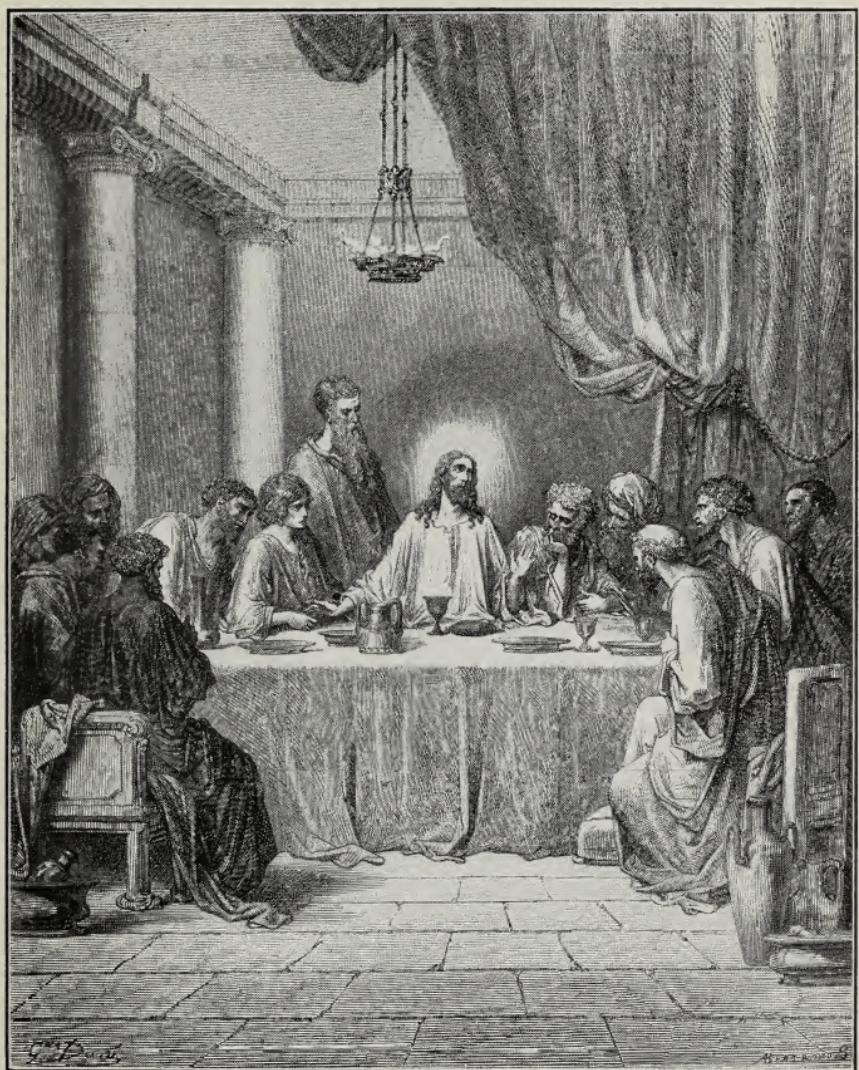
And as they were still in the upper room, our Lord took bread and broke it, and gave a piece to each of his apostles, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." And he took a cup of wine, and said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

And that was the beginning of what we call the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "For as often as ye do eat of this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

When the supper was over, and night was coming on, our Lord went out with his disciples to a garden, full of olive trees, called Gethsemane, where he often used to pray. He told them again

on the way that they would soon all be afraid, and leave him; but Peter could not think so, and said boldly that if everybody fell from him, he never would. But Jesus answered, "Verily, I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Then he went on to the garden, taking only Peter, James, and John into it with him, and telling them to watch while he went apart to pray. They were heavy and sorrowful, and could not keep awake; but while he was praying, he was in the greatest trouble and grief that ever anyone felt. He knelt and prayed in an agony, till his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. For he was feeling the sorrow for all the sin of the world — the sorrow that belongs to you and me. The disciples heard him say, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He came to them more than once, and called them, as if he longed for them to comfort him; but still they fell asleep again, though he said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."



The Last Supper

V

Just as our Lord had wakened his three apostles for the last time, there came a tread of soldiers, and lanterns gleaming through the olive trees. For Judas Iscariot, the traitor, knew that his master was apt to go to the olive garden to pray at night, and he was leading them, and he said to them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast." And he came up first to Jesus, and said, "Hail, master;" and kissed him. All our Lord said was, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Peter tried to defend him, and drew a sword and cut off the ear of one of the servants; but our Lord bade him put the sword back into the sheath; and then, in his great love, our blessed Lord touched the ear, and cured it in an instant, and begged that all the disciples might be allowed to go their way. Indeed, they were so much afraid that they all forsook him and fled away, except John and Peter, who both followed to see what would be done with him.

The soldiers dragged our blessed Lord to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, where his enemies tried to make out some charge to bring against him; but as he was good and holy, and

had no sin at all, they could accuse him of nothing. And when they asked him questions, he answered them not a word, for he knew that it was only to accuse him.

While he stood at the upper end of the hall, John, who knew one of the servants, had come in to the lower end, and had brought in Peter with him. The chill of the morning had come on, and the servants lighted a fire on the pavement, where Peter stood and warmed himself. One of the maids there looked at him, and asked if he did not belong to Jesus of Nazareth. Peter was afraid, and said, "I know not what thou sayest." But then another maid said, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter grew more afraid, and went on declaring he did not know such a person; but presently another servant said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Again Peter's fear of being punished for wounding the man in the garden led him further astray, for he began to curse and swear, and say, "I know not the man." Just then the cock crew, and the Lord turned round and looked upon Peter.

That look went to his heart. He went out and wept bitterly; and when he thought of his sin, he wept.

As soon as it was light, all the chief men of the Jews met in the council chamber in the temple,

and had our Lord brought before them. But no one could prove that he had broken the law; and whenever a story was brought against him, it turned out not to be true. At last the high priest stood up and commanded him to say whether he were the Christ or not. He answered, "Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." At this answer, Caiaphas and all the other enemies made a great outcry, as if they were very much shocked, at his speaking of himself as the great judge of all — namely, as God. They all cried, "He is guilty of death;" and they began to beat him and strike him; and they blindfolded him, and struck him on the face, and bade him say whose blow it was. And all the time he stood gentle and patient, and said not one word of complaint or anger.

Since the reign of the great wicked Herod, the Romans had not allowed the Jews to put anybody to death without their leave; so the chief priests were obliged to take Jesus before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. But it was not possible to find anything that a Roman would think he deserved to be put to death for. When the chief priests said that "by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God," Pilate

only feared to do anything against him; for he saw that there was no fault in Jesus, but that the chief priests were spiteful, and hated him.

Then the chief priests said that he called himself King of the Jews. This made Pilate more anxious, for to set up to be an earthly king would have been rebelling against the Romans; but still he wanted to let Jesus go, because he saw that he was innocent; yet he did not like to offend the priests, who might have accused him to the emperor of Rome. Pilate saw what was just; but he was afraid, and cared for himself more than for his duty.

Pilate thought he had found a way of saving the Lord Jesus without offending the Romans. It was the custom that at the feasts of the Passover he should set some prisoner free, whomsoever the Jews asked for. And he thought, as the people loved our Lord, that they would ask for him.

But there was a robber and murderer in prison named Barabbas, and the enemies of our Lord went about among the people, stirring them up to ask for him to be set free; so that the poor, foolish people all broke out with a great shout to ask that this murderer Barabbas might be set free.

Pilate asked them what he was to do with Jesus, and then there was a great roar from all the people, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Now, crucifying was a very horrible and painful punishment, that had never been allowed among the Jews, but was chiefly used by the Romans themselves for slaves and for robbers; so that their savage cry was for Jesus to have the punishment that belonged to Barabbas.

Pilate's soldiers were very cruel and they laughed at a poor man being called a king; so when they had beaten the blessed Jesus till he was bleeding all over, they took one of their old red soldiers' cloaks and threw it over him; and they plaited a crown of sharp thorns, and forced it upon his head; and they put a reed in his right hand, instead of a scepter; and they bowed their knees mocking him by pretending to do him honor.

He never spoke one word of anger all this time; and when Pilate saw his meek, brave, patient face pale and faint with pain, and streaming with blood, he thought the people would pity him; so he led him out once more to the top of the steps of the judgment hall, and said, "Behold the man!" But the people were too mad to have any pity or feeling, and they only cried louder and louder still, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Pilate was not brave enough to go against them all, even to save an innocent man; so all he did was to take water and wash his hands before them all, to show that he was clear of wishing it, and he said

"I am innocent of the blood of this just person." But the people made the dreadful answer: "His blood be on us, and on our children!" meaning that they would take the guilt and punishment.

VI

When the judgment was over, Pilate gave up our Lord to the four soldiers who were to crucify him. His cross, a heavy beam of wood, with another fastened across it, was laid on his shoulders, that he might carry it to the place where he was to suffer — a place named Calvary, outside the walls of Jerusalem. He was so weak and worn out after the long sad night, the being taken from one judge to another, and the beating and tormenting, that he could hardly walk under it; and the soldiers met a man coming out of the country whom they forced to carry it after Jesus.

When they came to Calvary, the soldiers made the blessed Jesus lie down on the beam of wood, and they stretched his arms out on the cross-beam, and drove a large nail through each of the palms of his hands into the wood, and another nail through his feet; and then they lifted up the cross, with him upon it, and planted it in the ground, that he might hang there till he should die. And all he said while they were thus nailing him were the words, "Father, forgive them; for they know

not what they do!" That was the great pain he bore to save us.

Over the head of the blessed Lord on the cross was a tablet, with the words, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS;" and on each side of him was another cross, with a robber upon it.

There he hung patiently, while the chief priests and Pharisees passed by, mocking and laughing at his pain, and crying out, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Even the robbers at first joined in the cry; but by-and-by one of them began to feel that he who was so patient and so great in all that agony must truly be the Son of God; and he rebuked his fellow, and said, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" And the Lord answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!"

His holy mother had come to stand by the foot of his cross, and with her, her sister and some other women, and his beloved apostle John. The Lord looked down at her, and said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and he looked at John, and said, "Behold thy mother!" And John took her home with him, and was always like a son to her afterwards.

At noon-day, a dreadful darkness came over all

the earth, and it lasted for three whole hours, as if the very sun mourned for him who made it. Just at three o'clock, the blessed Lord said, "I thirst;" and as one of the soldiers was touching his lips with a sponge full of vinegar, he gave a great sad cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Then presently he added, "It is finished! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" And he cried with a loud cry; and so he, who was God and man in one, died for us men, and for our salvation.

There were some good people even among the chief of the Jews; and two of these, named Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, went to Pontius Pilate, and asked him to let them bury the body of Jesus. People generally were much longer in dying on the cross, so Pilate sent to see if he was dead. To make sure, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and out came blood and water together. The robbers were still alive, so the soldiers broke their legs, that they might die sooner; and so the repenting one soon went to our Lord in paradise.

Then Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the holy body down from the cross, quite dead. Now, close by, Joseph had a garden, and in it was a cave which he meant to be buried in, but where no one had yet been laid. They carried our

Lord's body there; and the good women who followed him, Mary Magdalene and the rest, wrapped it up in linen cloths and sweet spices. They wanted to do more for it; but it was getting late on Friday evening, and the Sabbath or seventh day was counted from sunset, and then they could do no manner of work. So they had to wait till the Sabbath should be over; and Joseph rolled a great rock to close up the door, and they went away in their grief.

And then came a guard of soldiers, whom the chief priests had sent to watch the stone, for fear as they told Pilate, that the disciples should steal the body away in the night. So they put seals, to make sure that no one should move the stone; and the soldiers were set to watch.

VII

The holy women waited all the Sabbath day in sorrow; and our Lord Jesus lay in his grave. But, on the night after, he rose up from his grave, and came forth again, for he is alive forevermore. There was a great earthquake, and an angel came from heaven, and rolled away the stone from the door of the cave, and sat upon it; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and were as dead men.

Very early in the morning, Mary Magdalene and the other women came with the sweet spices

they had prepared. They wondered who would roll away the stone for them; but when they came nearer, they saw that it was taken away; and when they went in, they saw that the body of the Lord was gone. They feared at first that some one had taken it away; but behold, two men stood by them in shining garments, who said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

And as the women went in great wonder to tell the disciples, they saw Jesus himself, the same whom they had seen and touched quite dead the day before yesterday, standing before them, speaking kindly to them. So they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. For never was there such wonderful joy and gladness in all the world.

It was the first day of the week that our Lord rose from the dead, and we call that day the Lord's day, and have kept it holy ever since, instead of the seventh. But on that first day it seemed too wonderful. The apostles had never understood when their Lord spoke of dying and rising again; and though the women said they had seen him, they were afraid to trust their word, and thought it a mistake.

Later in the day, two of the disciples were walking to Emmaus, a little village near Jerusalem,

when a stranger came and joined them. He asked why they were sad, and what they were talking of. They told him it was of Jesus of Nazareth, who had been a great prophet, and they had hoped would have redeemed Israel: but now he had been put to death the day before yesterday, yet that some of the women said that they had seen a vision of angels which said that he was alive. Then the stranger began to show them, as they had never seen before, that all the Old Testament meant that when the Christ came, the Seed of the woman, he was to suffer, and save the world before his kingdom and glory could begin; and their minds understood, for they were opened to see and know the Scripture, so that they were sure that Jesus was the Christ.

So they came to Emmaus, and went into a house; and the stranger made as if he would have gone farther, but they pressed him to come in. He sat down with them, and took bread and blessed and broke it; and then their eyes were opened, and they knew it was Jesus himself! And as they knew him he vanished out of their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?"

In the evening, the ten apostles were all together in the upper room, with the doors close shut, for

fear of the Jews. There were only ten, for Thomas was not there; the wretched Judas had hung himself in his grief and despair. The two disciples came back from Emmaus, and told how they had seen Jesus; and while they were telling about it, though the door was not opened, they found Jesus himself standing in the midst, and they heard his voice say, "Peace be unto you."

They were afraid at first; but again he said, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Then he showed them that there were the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, and the spear-wound in his side; so that it was his own real body that had come again from the dead.

And while they could not believe for joy, and wondered, he said, "Have ye here any meat?" And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and a honey-comb; and he ate with them, to make them quite sure it was himself.

And he explained all to them, and showed them how he really is the Christ the Son of God; and told them that, as his father had sent him, so he would send them to teach all nations how he had died and risen again to save men from their sins.

VIII

Our blessed Lord Jesus did not stay with his apostles as he did before his death and rising. They did not see him after that first day for a whole week; and they could not make Thomas, who had not been there when he came, believe that it was true that any man could come again from the grave. He said he should never believe that it was the Lord himself, unless he could put his finger into the print of the nails, and his hand into the wound in the side.

The next Sunday evening, Thomas and the other ten were all in the upper room together, when Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said, to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

Then Thomas knew him indeed, and could only say, "My Lord and my God."

And the Lord answered, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And that is the blessing for all who have lived since our blessed Lord was on earth. We do not see him, but we must believe in

him; and that faith is the beginning of all goodness.

Our Lord told his apostles to go into Galilee; and there some of them went out fishing on the lake, as they used to do; but they fished all night, and caught nothing. In the dawn of morning, they saw One standing on the bank, and he said, "Children, have ye any meat?" They said, "No." Then he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." And directly the net was full of a hundred and fifty-three fishes, all large and good, and it did not break! Then John knew who it was, and said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And Peter was so glad, that he sprang out of the boat, and came hurrying through the water to his Master's feet.

And Jesus said, "Come and dine;" and the disciples found a fire ready lighted on the bank, with the broiled fish and bread; and they ate with him again, and felt his care after their long weary, hungry night.

When they had eaten, the Lord said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," Peter answered.

"Feed my sheep," our Lord said. Then again he asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," said

Peter. "Feed my lambs," he said; and again he asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Then Peter was grieved, and said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

And again Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Peter knew that our Lord is the Good Shepherd, and that his sheep and lambs are the people and the children of his flock, and that he was to show his love for his Master by taking care of them.

For forty days our Lord came in ways like what I have told you to see and teach his disciples. Once, five hundred of them saw him together; but he never came to the wicked, unbelieving Jews again.

But when the feast of weeks was near, the disciples went back to keep it at Jerusalem. There our Lord came to them again, and he led the eleven apostles out with him to the Mount of Olives. He taught them, and charged them much; and he gave them a great command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

And then he bade them stay at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high.

And while he talked with them, he was parted from them, and ascended up into heaven, going higher and higher, till a cloud received him out of their sight.

While they still looked up after him, two angels stood by them and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

And so it was that our blessed Lord Jesus ascended up to his throne in heaven again, after he had been born, and lived, and died to save us. And there he is in heaven, now watching over us, and laying all our prayers before his Father in heaven, and getting ready our home there.

IX

Our Lord had told the apostles that though he was going to heaven, he would send them another Comforter, who would be with them forever, and in whom he himself should be present with them — even God the Holy Ghost who is one with God the Father and God the Son.

Ten days after he had ascended up to heaven, on the great day of the feast of weeks as the disciples were together in one place at Jerusalem, they heard a sound like the noise of a rushing

mighty wind, and it filled all the house ; and there came flames like tongues divided in the midst, and sat on the head of each disciple — not burning, but shining. And wonderful knowledge came to all of them — they understood all they could not understand before ; and they could speak all sorts of different languages, without ever having learnt them. These wonders were to show them that God the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven to be with them, and to dwell in them, and help them, and make them strong forever and ever.

The Lord God the Holy Ghost continues to come and abide with us. He does not show us when he comes now, because it is more blessed to believe than to see ; but we know he does come to each of us when we believe, to help us and make us good.

The reason he made the apostles able to speak all those languages, was that they were to go and teach all the nations round, the gospel — that is to say, the good news that Christ was come, and had died for the sins of everyone, and risen again. They did go and teach ; and all who chose to believe and belong to Christ's kingdom were baptized. Then each of us receives the presence of the Holy Ghost, to help us to be good, and to keep God's holy law, the Ten Commandments, that he gave on Mount Sinai. More and more of that good help of the Holy Spirit is given to everyone who comes,

as our Lord bade, to take and eat and drink of the bread and wine, by which we partake of the body and blood of Christ; and he gives all that we ask to us if we pray to him. For we belong to those nations that the apostles were commanded to teach and baptize, and bring into the fold; and we belong to Jesus Christ just as much as his own first disciples did. We are called Christians, after his name; and all the time we live here, he takes care of us; and if we serve him, he takes our souls to be with him in paradise, when death parts them from our bodies.

Charlotte M. Yonge.

The Prodigal Son

OUR Lord was one day bidden to a feast by one of the chief Pharisees. At a feast there was always a "chief place," or "seat of honor," and sometimes there was quite an unseemly struggle amongst the guests to secure the best places. This happened at the feast at which Jesus was present, and He tried to show the guests how wrong and foolish it was to behave in this manner, and how certainly their pride would be humbled if they did. He told them that they should not choose the seat of honor in case a man might come whom the giver of the feast considered more worthy of honor than they. Then how ashamed they would feel when they were told to give up the seat and take a more lowly one! But if at first they seated themselves in the least honorable place, the giver of the feast would see them, and say: "Friend, go up higher." Then He added: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Jesus also told these proud Jews that there was very little merit in giving a feast to their rich

friends, who would be sure to invite them in return, so that they would be repaid for their hospitality. He said that to be really generous they should invite those from whom they could never hope for any return.

One of the men who listened to our Lord said, in reply to His words about the giving of feasts: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

Jesus wished to tell these Pharisees that many who expected, as a matter of course, to be received into the Kingdom of Heaven would be rejected because of their coldness and indifference towards God, whilst those whom they despised and thought beneath them would be preferred to them, having tried to obey God's will. And then Jesus told them the following parable. A certain man, He said, made ready a great supper, to which many were invited. When the feast was served he sent his servants to those he had asked to be his guests, saying: "Come, for the supper is ready." But none of them wished to come, and so they began making excuses. One said that he had bought a piece of land and was too busy over the purchase to spare time for the feast; another had bought some oxen and said he must attend to them; and another said he was newly married, and could not leave his wife. When the servants

came to their master, and told him of these excuses, the master was very angry, for in the East it was considered a great insult to refuse an invitation to a feast, and he said to his servants: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." When the servant had done this there was still room for more to sit down, and so the master sent his servants outside the city to search in the humblest dwellings for guests to fill the seats at his table. At length the house was full and the feast began; but not one of those first bidden was present at it, nor would they ever be allowed to enter that house again.

If we do not obey God's voice when He calls us, He will cease to speak, and the gates of Heaven will be barred against us, and we shall be left outside, like the guests who were bidden to the feast.

Not long after this Jesus reproved the Pharisees again by means of other parables.

They had complained because they had seen our Lord speaking with people whom they despised as "sinners," forgetting how sinful their own pride was. Jesus said that if anyone of them had a hundred sheep and one was lost he would most surely leave the ninety-nine sheep by themselves

and go and look for the lost one, and when he had found it he would come home rejoicing. Therefore He said it was but reasonable that He, the Shepherd of His people, should seek out those whom the Pharisees considered lost and try and bring them to repent of their sins.

There was a certain man who had two sons, Jesus said. The younger one grew tired of his home and asked his father to give him at once the portion of his inheritance which would fall to him at his father's death. When he had received his share he set out with it, and travelled to a far country, where he spared himself no pleasure that he fancied, so that very soon all he possessed was spent. Then he was in a very sad condition. None of the friends on whom he had wasted a great deal of his money would help him, and to add to his troubles there was a famine in the land, so that food was very dear. At last he became so hungry that he went and hired himself to a man as swineherd, and was glad to eat the food thrown to the swine. One day as he sat watching his herd, hungry and wretched, he began to think of his old home. There his father's servants were better off than he. Suddenly the memory of his father's love came rushing into his mind. How had he repaid that love? With heartless ingratitude! Now that he had begun

The Entry into Jerusalem, and The Widow's Mite

THE time of the Passover was drawing near, and our Lord wished to go up to Jerusalem to keep it for the last time. On His way He passed through Jericho and by the gates of this city sat a blind beggar, named Bartimeus. He heard the noise of many people passing by, for a great crowd followed Jesus, and he asked what it meant. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by he cried out: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

The people told him to be silent; but he called louder and louder, and Jesus heard him, and told the people to bring the beggar to Him.

When he stood before Jesus, our Lord said: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" and Bartimeus answered: "Lord, that I might receive my sight."

Jesus said: "Thy faith hath made thee whole," and He touched the blind man's eyes, and at once he received his sight and followed Jesus to Jerusalem.

Amongst the crowd with Jesus there was a

man named Zaccheus, who was most anxious to see our Lord; but he could not get near Him, and he was so short that the crowd hid Jesus from his sight.

So Zaccheus slipped away from the crowd and ran on ahead as fast as he could and climbed into a sycamore-tree, beneath which he knew Jesus would pass. He did not expect Jesus would notice him in any way, for Zaccheus was a publican. Publicans were the men who collected taxes for the Roman Government, and they were hated by the Jews, who did not think they ought to be forced to pay taxes.

When Jesus came to the sycamore-tree He stood still and said: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." How pleased Zaccheus felt that our Lord should so honor him! He came and stood before Jesus and promised eagerly: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

Those who were with Jesus were not pleased that He should go to Zaccheus' house, when many in a higher position in the town would have been glad to welcome Him; but our Lord knew that He should win one more soul by so doing. And so He did, for Zaccheus, who had not always been

quite honest, felt that after Jesus had treated him so lovingly he should be ashamed to cheat any more, and, as I told you, he promised not only to give back the money he had taken unjustly, but also to give half his goods to the poor, for Jesus' sake.

When the people of Jerusalem heard that Jesus was coming to their city great numbers went out to meet Him. They had heard from their friends how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, for I told you some of the Jews who were present at that miracle had believed that Jesus was the Christ, and these Jews had told others, who also believed. These people wished to treat Jesus as their king, and so some of them tore down the branches from the trees and strewed them before Him to make His pathway beautiful. Others spread their own robes upon the dusty road and cried: "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Jesus had sent two of His disciples to a certain house, telling them that they would there find a young ass, which they were to bring to Him. And, riding upon this ass, our Lord entered Jerusalem. Some of the Pharisees, who so hated our dear Lord, looked from their windows when they heard the shouts of the people, and asked in surprise who it was that was receiving such a

welcome from the people, and they were answered : “ This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.”

And so amidst the glad shouts of the people our Lord came to the Temple. Here He found that the money-changers and other merchants, whom He had driven away before, had returned, and once more the people were buying and selling in the House of God. Jesus again drove them out, and then He sat in the Temple, healing the sick who were brought to Him, whilst the little children sang: “ Hosanna to the Son of David ! ” The priests and Scribes wished Jesus to tell the children to be silent, but He would not, and said that God had pleasure in hearing their sweet praises.

Whilst Jesus sat in the Temple He watched the people putting their offerings into the chests placed there for that purpose.

Those who were rich sometimes gave large sums of money, and our Lord could not help noticing how anxious some of these people were that it should be known that they had given generously. They held their money so that all could see it, and then walked proudly along, thinking no doubt that people admired them because they were rich enough to give such large sums.

But our Lord does not approve of charity given in such a spirit. He knew these rich men had

not given anything they would really miss. Presently Jesus saw a poor widow pass by and modestly drop her offering into the treasure-chest. It was but two mites, the smallest coins and scarcely of the value of a farthing; but it was all the money she had, and therefore this poor widow had really given a far more generous offering than all the rich men had done.

Jesus called His disciples to Him, and, after telling them what He had seen, He added: "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

After Jesus had taught some time in the Temple, He left Jerusalem and went to Bethany, to the house of his friend Lazarus, for He knew that His life on earth was nearly over, and He wished to bid these dear friends good-bye.

L. L. Weedon.

The Story of Ananias and Sapphira*

I TOLD you about the disciples, in their new love for one another, sharing everything in common. Those who had lands or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles, and they distributed it to those who had need. Among others, a man named Barnabas, who was very much interested in helping the poor, sold all his land and gave the money to the apostles. Unlike Barnabas, a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a possession and laid part of the price at the apostles' feet; part of it they kept for themselves. They pretended they had given it all into the common fund of the Lord's people but really, in their hearts, they were deceivers and were acting a lie. It is just as bad to act a lie as to tell a lie.

Peter, looking sternly at Ananias, said, Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land?

While it remained was it not thine own, and

* From *The Story Bible*, by Margaret E. Sangster, by permission of Moffat, Yard, & Company.

after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God.

When Ananias heard these words, he was pierced to the heart and fell down dead at the feet of Peter. Great fear came on all who saw and heard it. The young men arose, carried him out and buried him. About three hours after this, his wife Sapphira, not knowing what had happened to Ananias, came in, and Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? Without an instant's hesitation, she said, Yes for so much, repeating the same lie.

Then Peter said to her, How is it that ye have agreed together against the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet and gave up the ghost. And the young men came in and found her dead and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

In every age since then the names of Ananias and Sapphira have stood as a warning against lying and deceit. It is little wonder that everybody who heard and saw this dreadful fate of the two deceivers were greatly terrified. Meanwhile, many signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles and people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that the shadow of

Peter passing by might fall on them. The high priest and the chief priests became filled with indignation. They seized Peter and John and put them in the common prison. They thought they had them safe enough, but the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, Go stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life. What Christ brought into the world was life.

Peter and John went to the Temple early in the morning and taught just as usual. The high priest took his seat upon the chair of judgment and called his council together. Officers were sent to the prison to bring Peter and John to the bar. But directly the officers came rushing back in great excitement, saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety and the keepers standing outside the doors but, when we had opened, we found no man within. The high priest and the captain of the Temple turned pale with rage and fright and they were the more astonished when some one said, Behold the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people. The captain and the officers brought Peter and John from the Temple without violence, fearing a riot if they treated them roughly. The high priest upbraided them, but Peter said, We ought to obey God rather than men. With the

utmost courage Peter told them again the story of the resurrection. They heard it with fury and at first determined to put the apostles to death if they could; but a wise man named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, advised them to let the apostles alone as it was not worth while for men to try to fight against God. So they contented themselves with beating Peter and John, who bore the stripes without a murmur, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the dear name of Christ.

Margaret E. Sangster.

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